

Galton

THE
POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF
JEREMIAH SEED, M. A. *K*

Late Rector of ENHAM in HAMPSHIRE, and
Fellow of QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

CONSISTING OF
SERMONS, LETTERS, ESSAYS, etc.

Published from the AUTHOR'S original Manuscripts,

By JOSEPH HALL, M. A.

Fellow of QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

THE THIRD EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed for W. STRAHAN; and W. JOHNSTON,
in Ludgate-Street. MDCCLXX.

10



THE
C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

Moral Certainty a sufficient Ground for the
Belief of Christianity.

2 PETER I. 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly devised
Fables, when we made known unto you the
Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus
Christ.* Pag. 1.

S E R M O N II.

Improbabilities not sufficient to invalidate
Moral Certainty.

HEBREWS X. 23.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith
without wavering: for he is faithful that
promised.* P. 25.

S E R M O N III.

The usual Objections against Revelation
founded in Ignorance.

A 2

CONTENTS.

I COR. I. 25.

*The Foolishness of God is wiser than Men;
and the Weakness of God is stronger than
Men.*

P. 55.

SERMON IV.

The usual Objections against Revelation
founded in Ignorance.

I COR. I. 25.

*The Foolishness of God is wiser than Men;
and the Weakness of God is stronger than
Men.*

P. 76.

SERMON V.

The Damnatory Clauses in the ATHANA-
SIAN Creed justified.

MARK XVI. 16.

He that believeth not shall be damned. p. 100.

SERMON VI.

The Being, Nature and Offices of Evil
Spirits considered.

I PET. V. 9. latter Part.

—*Your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring
Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may
devour.*

p. 129.

CONTENTS.

SERMON VII.

Curiosity in unnecessary Matters censured
and condemned.

JOHN XXI. 22.

—*If I will, that He tarry till I come, what
is that to thee; follow thou me.* p. 154.

SERMON VIII.

Delight in GOD the Origin and Perfection
of human Pleasure.

PSALM XXXVII. 4.

*Delight Thyself also in the LORD; and
He shall give Thee the Desires of thine
Heart.* p. 172.

SERMON IX.

The Duty of honouring the KING founded
on the Fear of GOD.

I PET. II. 17.

Fear GOD, Honour the KING. p. 190.

SERMON X.

Religious Pleasures productive of the great-
est Happiness.

CONTENTS.

PROV. III. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness. p. 215.

SERMON XI.

Of Anger, Meekness, etc.

EPHES. IV. 26.

Be ye angry, and sin not. p. 231.

SERMON XII.

The Duty of Charity stated and enforced.

PROV. III. 27.

*With-hold not Good from them to whom it is
due, when it is in the Power of thine Hands
to do it.* p. 271.

SERMON XIII.

The Christian Life a progressive State.

PROV. IV. 18.

*The Path of the Just is as the shining Light;
shining more and more unto the perfect
Day.* p. 298.

CONTENTS.

SERMON XIV.

National Wickedness in Danger of provoking National Judgments.

ISAIAH V. 4, 5.

What could have been done more for my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked for Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes?

And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard: I will take away the Hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the Wall thereof, and it shall be troden down.

P. 327.

SERMON XV.

The Happiness of the Good in a future State.

MATTHEW XXV. 21.

Well done, thou good and faithful Servant; Thou hast been faithful over a few Things, I will make thee Ruler over many Things: enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.

P. 349.

THREE LETTERS to a Friend on the Satisfaction of Christ: Wherein are occasionally considered, The Infinity of the Deity, his Eternity, Prescience, etc.

CONTENTS.

<i>The first LETTER, etc.</i>	p. 379.
<i>The second LETTER.</i>	p. 401.
<i>The third LETTER.</i>	p. 434.
<i>The fourth LETTER, to the Reverend T. H. relating to a Passage in one of the Author's Sermons.</i>	p. 471.
<i>The fifth LETTER, wrote, under a feigned Name, to a Friend in a dangerous Fit of Sickness.</i>	p. 476.
<i>An ESSAY on refined and friendly Conver- sation, written in the twenty-second Year of the Author's Age.</i>	p. 481.

SERMON

SERMON

SERMON I.

Moral Certainty a sufficient Ground
for the Belief of Christianity.

Preached in *Queen's College Chapel.*

2 PETER i. 16.

*For we have not followed cunningly devised
Fables, when we made known unto you
the Power and Coming of our Lord Je-
sus Christ.*

WHOEVER attentively peruses the SERM. I.
Writings of the Evangelists and
Apostles, will scarce need any other Proof
to convince him, that *they did not follow
cunningly devised Fables*, or draw up an
artificial Account of Things. There are
at least as strong Proofs for the Genuine-
ness even of the *controverted Books* of
Scripture, as there are for that of any *un-
controverted Book* in *Pagan Antiquity*.
But let us suppose it to be, what it is not,
a Matter of Uncertainty, whether such a
Record of Christianity be His whose Name
it bears; still we must distinguish between
B the

SERM. I. the *Author* and the *Authority* of the Book.

Whatever becomes of the *Author*, the *Authority* of the Book is unquestionably good; if it be shewn, that it could not have been received from the first by a vast Number of Persons as a *true History*, but upon a Supposition that it really was so: it being an impracticable Thing to obtrude upon the World a Variety of *recent Facts* with the most memorable and glaring Circumstances, asserted to be done before the Chief Priests and Scribes, and the whole People of *Jerusalem*, as Spectators and Eye-witnesses. Whoever were the Authors of the Gospels, they certainly *expected* to be believed: But how could they have *expected* any such Thing in Case of an Imposture, when they refer expressly and by Name, to *Time*, *Place*, and *Person*; when they virtually appeal to the Senses of that very Age and Nation for the Truth of their Relations? It is not the Interest of an Impostor to be *particular, explicit, and circumstantial*: He must avoid, as a Rock upon which he must inevitably split, *Dates* of Time, the particular Place of Action, (especially if it be a public one; and near at Hand, where such a Miracle is pretended to be wrought) the *Names, Number* and *Rank* of the Spectators. His Art consists in laying the Scene at a great Distance, in giving *general, confused* and *undistinguished* Accounts of Things, and

and in skulking behind a thousand Evasions, those Holes which Creatures of Subtlety have sequestered from the Light of the Sun; and to which they always retreat, when closely pursued. Whereas in the *New Testament* there is that undissembled Openness of Soul, that unaffected Frankness and unconstrained Freedom in relating Things with perfect Ease and without any Effort; which could come from none but *ingenuous* Writers, and can, I think, be resisted by none but *disingenuous* Readers.

Add to this, that whoever were the *Authors*, they were *inspired*. For one of the notorious Facts on which great Stress in many Places is laid, is that the *Holy Ghost* was given by the laying on of the *Apostles Hands*; in Consequence of which the new Converts prophesied and spoke with *new Tongues*. For the Truth of this *St. Paul* appeals to the Church of *Corinth*; and if it had not been true, he must have been looked upon by them as an abandoned Impostor, charging them with the Abuse and Misapplication of spiritual and miraculous Gifts they never had. Whoever intends to deceive, must be solicitous to save the Appearances of Truth; which, upon a Supposition of the Falsity of this Fact, *St. Paul* by no means did. For he lays down *that* as a known Truth, which those to whom he addressed his Epistle must know,

SERM. I.

from what passed within them, to be egregiously false. Now if there was such a plentiful Effusion of the Holy Spirit even to those who did no distinguished Service to the Church; we cannot rationally suppose it was denied to those, who made it their honest Endeavour to perpetuate the Faith by their Writings. The Dew of Heaven, while it descended on Places comparatively waste and barren, would not be withheld from a more kindly Soil, productive of the most generous Fruits for the Service and Food of Man.

In prosecuting this Subject, I shall shew,

Ist, How far and in what Degree an Assent to the Truth of Christianity is obligatory upon us, supposing a Sufficiency of Evidence for it.

II^{dly}, That there is such a Sufficiency of Evidence for it, that we cannot, consistently with Reason, refuse to be determined by it.

III^{dly}, I shall conclude with a short Reflection on the Importance of Christianity, and our Insensibility of it's just Value.

Christianity stands upon the very same Footing as *Morality* does, in Point of Obligation. For we resolve the Obligation of *Morality*, or trace it up to it's Fountain-Head,

Head, after the following Manner.—

SERM. I.

Virtue is necessarily productive of the Happiness of Mankind ; and Vice of Misery and Confusion.—A Being of infinite Benevolence must *will* whatever is necessarily productive of general Happiness.—Every Creature is obliged to conform himself to the Will of his Creator.

To apply this to Christianity. One cannot consistently disbelieve Christianity, without disbelieving every thing else, that has *only* the *same* Degree of Evidence.—One cannot disbelieve every Thing else that has the *same* Degree of Evidence, without proceeding upon a Principle, that is, in it's genuine Tendency, destructive of universal Happiness, and defeats the very End of our social Nature.—One cannot therefore disbelieve Christianity without counteracting the great Will, and sovereign Pleasure of Him, who made us social Beings, and wills the Happiness of all his Creatures.—The Consequence of which is, that the Belief of Christianity is as obligatory, terminating ultimately in the Will of the Deity, as is the Practice of Morality ; and stands upon the very same Foundation. The End of Society cannot be attained, if there be nothing to be believed, or depended upon between Man and Man ; or, if there be no satisfactory Grounds why a Thing is to be depended upon ; or, if we be not obliged

SERM. I. to pay any Regard to them. For which Reason, *Deism*, if it could be consistent with itself, in the last Resort must lead to and terminate in *Atheism*. For there could be no Providence, if the World were all Chaos and Confusion. Now the World must be all Chaos and Confusion, (there being nothing left for us to depend upon in our Intercourse with one another) upon a Supposition that Moral Evidence, however perfect in it's Kind, does but lead us into Error. For if there be such a Thing as Providence, all the Administrations of it from the Beginning have proceeded, and the Course of the World has been ordered, upon a Supposition that there is such a Thing as Sincerity and a Regard for Truth prevailing among Mankind; and that there are certain Marks to distinguish, in many Cases, *Honesty* from *Imposture*. But the Scheme of the *Deists* (as they set aside the Testimony of the Apostles and primitive Martyrs, who have as fair Pretensions to Honesty, as any other Persons) must proceed upon a contrary Supposition; that the World is one wide Scene of Villainy and Confusion; that we may weary ourselves in the Search of a Man of Sense that is not a Deceiver; and a Man of Honesty that is not a Dupe. The Wheels of Government must be interrupted and stand still, if such Evidences, as Christianity is attended with,

be

be exploded as fallacious and uncertain. SERM. I.
No proper Measures can be taken, upon this Supposition, to prevent a Rebellion, to crush it in it's Infancy, or to make a Head against it, when become formidable. We must not believe any Thing that we hear, however concerning it may be to ourselves, and however well attested by Persons superior to any sinister Designs; and thus Wisdom would be quite shut out at one great Entrance. We cannot depreciate Moral Certainty without striking at the Belief of an over-ruling Providence. For there can be no Providence, unless there be an orderly Course of Things and some regular Plan which takes place. One would not chuse to live in a World where there was no Order, no Principle of mutual Trust and social Union, no Dependence of one Person upon another. One would not chuse to sit out a Play, where the Drama was ill conducted; where every Thing was disjointed, without any Unity of Design, or Connection of one Thing with another. The Truth is, Men *cannot*, were they never so much inclined to it in all Cases, act up to that Principle, by Virtue of which some reject Christianity. They *cannot*, without always putting a Force upon Nature. Now Nature has a Kind of Elasticity and Spring, by which it recovers itself, when it is violently pressed and a Force put

SERM. I.

upon it. If Matter of Fact, Sense and Experience were not too hard for all the ingenious and subtle Reasonings, which Men of Leisure and Parts may invent against almost any Thing whatever, we should be in perpetual Danger of running into universal Scepticism.

By acting then upon such Grounds and Principles, as those whereon Christianity is founded, we act agreeably to the Laws of Nature; our social Nature; and consequently express our Duty to the Author of our Nature and it's Laws: in other Words, we act religiously, virtuously, and rationally. If Mankind be rational Beings, the Welfare of Mankind must be the Welfare of a rational Nature; and therefore the Laws which advance it must be founded in Reason; nor can their Authority be resisted by any Thing but what is at the same Time opposite to Reason, and therefore to Truth; Consequently, the Denial of Moral Evidence as well as of Immorality, must be contrary to Truth and Reason; because the Denial in both Cases would be subversive of human Happiness and ruinous in its Consequences.

Nay if some Persons of the first Distinction in the Philosophical World reason justly; the Evidence of the Truth of our *Senses* is placed upon no *better* Foundation, than that of the Truth of Christianity. For they
argue

argue thus ; there being no strict Demon-
stration that Bodies exist, or that there is
a material World, the only Argument that
seems to have the Force of one, is this ; it
is evident God cannot deceive us by Ap-
pearances instead of Realities ; it is evident
he does delude us every Moment, if there
be no Bodies ; it is evident therefore there
must be Bodies. Whatever Weight this
Kind of arguing may have, it is fully as
conclusive in Favour of Moral Evidence,
and consequently, of what is founded upon
Moral Evidence, the Truth of Christiani-
ty. It admits of no Dispute, that we are
obliged to be determined by the Laws of our
Nature, which are in the last Resort the
Laws of God ; and that the Deity has laid
us under a Necessity of closing with moral
Proofs. Now the Deity can no more lay
us under a moral Necessity of submitting
to an unavoidable Delusion in Affairs of a
moral Nature, than he can subject us to a
perpetual Deception, as to the Reports of
the Senses. Therefore Moral Evidence,
when compleat in its Kind, can no more
delude us, than the Perception of the Senses
can be altogether delusory. Nay Evidence
of this Nature, though not so striking,
seems sometimes equivalent to that of Sense,
and is productive of as undoubted an As-
surance, But this brings me to shew

Idly,

SERM. I.

Illy, That there is such a Sufficiency of Evidence for Christianity, that we cannot, consistently with Reason, refuse to be determined by it.

There are as strong Proofs, that Jesus and his Apostles wrought Miracles, as that such Men ever existed. And the only Reason, why few or none dispute their Existence, whereas several deny the Reality of their Miracles, is; that their Existence considered apart from Circumstances relative to us, is an uninteresting Point; and, nothing depending upon it, Reason is left in it's full Freedom to determine as it sees Evidence. But the Miracles being wrought to establish a Religion, by which we are to be saved or condemned; the Passions immediately take the Alarm, and are up in Arms as against an Enemy that is come to disturb their Repose, and reduce their exorbitant Power. For the Resistance to Truth bears generally an exact Proportion to it's Weight or Moment.

It is idle for the *Deists* to run out into long Declamations against Historical Evidence; that it is in many Cases precarious and uncertain; that Historians give different, and sometimes contradictory Reports of the very same Action. This is only to empty their Quiver in the Air without aiming at a certain Mark. It is to discharge their Artillery against Historical Evidence

at large, without levelling it against the SERM. I. particular Point in Debate: the Question not being, whether Historical Evidence may not be sometimes uncertain and inconclusive? but whether any Evidence can be so, that is so circumstanced as that for Christianity is? Where, if there had been any Imposture, it was utterly impossible but that the Imposture must have been discovered and the World undeceived. Thousands could not have been converted to Christianity, and have died for it, unless it had carried the strongest Conviction with it. For Men will not embrace a new Institution, subversive of every other, in Opposition to their former Prejudices and worldly Interests, without very forcible Proofs. Miraculous Facts said to be done in the Eye of the World for a Course of Years, before a great Number of Witnesses, before Enemies as well as Friends (not to confirm an established Religion, but to build a new one upon the Ruins of the former) could not have been believed to be true, if they were not so, by those, who lived at that Juncture; and in those public Places where they pretended to work them; such as *Jerusalem, Ephesus, Antioch, Corinth, &c.* For a Set of Men to endeavour to deceive the World in such an astonishing manner, would have been looked upon as an audacious and unparallelled Attempt to impose upon the Senses of Mankind;

SERM. I. kind; and Christianity in that Case would have been like the Grass growing upon the House-Top; by lying so open and exposed, and wanting a sufficient Depth of Soil, it would have withered away of itself, and prevented the Violence of any hostile Hand.

But suppose, through some unaccountable Enthusiasm or Madness which then seized and possessed the Minds of the People, it had spread far and near; yet in this Case the *Jewish Rulers* and *Magistrates* could never have stood by unconcerned, as idle Spectators. They were highly interested to detect the Falshood, and to do themselves Justice, as being charged with the Murder of an innocent Person. They were obliged in Duty to their Law, in Charity to their own Nation and the World, to suppress, as far as they could, the Belief of the Resurrection, and the subsequent Miracles wrought in Confirmation of it. By their Authority they could, and by their Inclination they would have exploded the Imposture: they would have invalidated all the Testimonies relating to these false Facts, if false they had been, by producing strong Counter-Evidence.

The Apostles on the other Hand, supposing the *Truth* of the Resurrection, had all the Reasons that worldly Prudence could suggest to have concealed it; since they could not but foresee, that to maintain it

would draw upon them a Train of fatal SERM. I. Consequences. But supposing the *Falshood* of it, all the Motives both of this World and the next conspired against their Propagation of it. They could not think that the Chiefs of the *Jewish* State would let them publish every where throughout the World, that they had shed innocent Blood, the Blood of the *Prince of Life*, whom *God had raised up*, without calling them to an Account for it.

A long continued Succession of wonderful Works, many of them said to have been performed in Places of the greatest Resort, (as any one that reads the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles may find) must have laid open to public Examination; and, if false, to public Detection. The chief Men among them, as their Reputation, Religion and Interest were struck at, had all the Motives to detect and suppress Christianity (which were wanting for the Propagation and Success of it) and they had all the Advantages imaginable to compass their End. And had the Men of Power and Policy, who were extreme to mark any Thing amiss in their Conduct, convicted the Apostles of *one* Falshood; their Credit must have been for ever after blasted. Truth itself would have been suspected from Persons proved guilty of a solemn and deliberate Villainy, yet pretending to
act

SERM. I.

act it in the Name of God: but Falshood could not have been credited. Imposture is like that Kind of Animal, which does a great deal of Mischief; but then it is only while it works in Secret and under Cover: As soon as it appears above Ground and is discovered in Day-Light, it is rendered incapable of doing any further Detriment. Their Enemies, right or wrong, would endeavour to sully the Brightness of their Characters. And when one considers them in their exalted Situation as Ambassadors of God, a Spectacle to Mankind on the open Theatre of the World, they must (plain and unlearned as they were) have acted their Parts with uncommon Address not to have been discovered. Like Statues placed on an high Pedestal, they must have been somewhat bigger than the Life, not to look less than it; I mean they must have *been better* than the common run of Men, not to have *appeared worse* than them; when their Actions and Characters would be scanned with all the Quick-sightedness of Malice, ever vigilant to seek Occasion against them.

In short, the Facts thus circumstanced prove themselves; and the only Reason why, at the Time and Place when and where they were said to be done, they were *believed* to be true by Persons tenacious of another Religion, is, that they *were* true; as the only Reason why a self-evident Proposition

position which draws after it a Train of SERM. I. unacceptable Consequences is admitted to be true, is, that it cannot be denied. All other Suppositions are forced and unnatural, and such as would not be endured by any Man of common Sense in any other Case.

Nay, no Account can be given, why the Chief Priests and Rulers, who could suborn the Soldiers to tell a senseless Falshood about the *Resurrection*, did not attempt to disprove the *other marvellous Facts*, though convinced that they were true, but this; that they were so notoriously true, it would have been of no Avail to have denied them. It would have been as ridiculous, at that Time and in that Place, to have set about a Confutation of such overbearing Evidence, as it would have been to have denied a self-evident Proposition. They might as well have asserted that the *Feast of Pentecost* was not observed at *Jerusalem*, as that the Miracle of the *Gift of Tongues* was not wrought publickly at that Festival, when there were so many living Witnesses from every Nation under Heaven to attest the Truth of it.

Nay, so far were the *Ancient Jews*, however virulent, from confronting the Evidence for Christianity, that the *Jerusalem Talmud**, which contains a Collection of

* See Bp. Chandler's Defence of Christianity, pages 429, 430.

SERM. I.

the Traditions of their Fore-fathers, and was composed about three hundred Years after the Birth of our Saviour, has preserved the Memory of some of our Saviour's Miracles; as that he *walked on the Sea*, and *that he raised the Dead*; and it mentions the very Persons by Name with particular Circumstances, whom St. *James* miraculously cured, though their Distempers were mortal, by the Name of *Jesus Christ*. The State of the Question is now changed; in those early Times they did not (and the only Reason was, they *could not*) contest the Reality of the Miracles; what they contested was, the Inference from thence; the Truth of the Doctrines: The ablest of our modern Adversaries own, the Doctrines must be allowed to be true, supposing the Miracles actually wrought; but deny that they were wrought. For thus One of the most sagacious of them says, (and what he says is very true) "God can never be supposed often to permit Miracles to be done in Confirmation of a false or pretended Mission."

Add to this, that several thousands, who must be privy to the Imposture, if there was one, sealed the Truth of Christianity with their Blood. They, like *Sampson*, and like him too with a Strength superior to their own, attempted to pull down the Temple of Heathenism; and to lay the Edifice,

Edifice, the Work of Ages, low in the SERM. I. Dust; at the same Time that they foresaw they should be buried in it's Ruins: and like him, destroyed more Enemies to the true Religion at and by their Deaths, than they did in their Lives.

Out of a numberless List of Martyrs let us single out St. *Simeon* Bishop of *Jerusalem*, laying down, at the Age of one hundred and twenty Years, that Life, for the Truth of Christianity, which he had conducted by the Precepts of it; whose extreme old Age was of the lowest Consideration to make him venerable. Was this Person a deluded Zealot? No; he who was a near Relation of our Saviour, and intimately conversant with him and the Apostles, could not be ignorant of their Characters, Views and Actions; this admits of no Dispute, and needs no laboured Proof. Was he then an artful Deluder? But could he, conscious that Christ and his Apostles were Deceivers, profess his Faith in him to the last, when he was three Days, as *Hegesippus* (an early Writer of the same Church) informs us, in dying by Piece-meal, under the most exquisite Tortures; while Death advanced by Degrees, in it's most ghastly Form? How could he, I say, profess his Faith to the last, and rejoice in his Sufferings with such determined Chearfulness as surprised his Tormentors?

C

Yes,

SERM. I. Yes, some will say, *Vain-glory* is a very strong Passion. Vain-glorious Wretch beyond Example! To be expanding all his Sails, and striving to gather in every Blast of Applause, at the same Time that his weak Vessel, decayed by Age, was sinking irretrievably in the Deep, by a most violent Storm! Was this all he had in View, to make one short-lived Blaze, just as the Candle was sinking in the Socket, and then go out in everlasting Night? Certainly when Pain pressed rudely in, and boisterously, for a long Time, demanded to be heard; it would at last awaken him, however profound his Repose might be, from an airy Dream, of an imaginary Existence after Death. Hopes of immortal Bliss, in Case he were a Deceiver, he could have none, but rather a *fearful looking for of Judgment to come*. The Desire of posthumous Applause is artificially raised; and those Passions, which are introduced by Art, must always at length give way to those that are inborn (especially to so invincible a one as that of Happiness) and throw off the incumbent Weight of long-uninterrupted Misery. It is not a *Plant which our heavenly Father hath planted*, it is not the native Growth of the Soil, and therefore it must come to nought, and die away by the rigorous Inclemency of the Season. Idle and empty Reflections upon
 leaving

leaving a Name behind us, cannot stand SERM. I.
their Ground against unintermitting un-
easy Sensations of three Days Continuance;
but must vanish before them, *like as Wax*
melteeth at the Fire.

Those who resolve such Effects into *Pride*, ought to produce some Instances from History, when and where *Pride* has had such an effect. *Ask now of the Days that are past, which were before Thee, since the Day that God created Man on the Earth; and ask from the one Side of the Heaven to the other, whether there hath been any such Thing as this, or hath been heard like it? viz.* that several thousands, in the early Persecutions of *Nero, Domitian and Trajan*, should lay down their Lives not for a false Religion, independent on certain Facts (for that is a very possible Case;) but for a false Religion, whose pretended Basis was certain Matters of Fact said to be lately done: and when they must have known whether they were done or not, without a most unheard-of and unexampled Neglect to enquire into the Foundation on which they rested.

God cannot, consistently with his Goodness and Veracity, reduce his Creatures to such a Case (especially if a Case of Importance) that they cannot act reasonably without yielding their Assent to a Falshood—They cannot act reasonably without yielding their Assent to Christianity—Therefore

SERM. I. Christianity is no Falshood. They cannot act but in a Manner, which would be deemed unreasonable in any other Affair.

For, to put the Matter at the lowest; does any Man, whether Believer or Unbeliever, doubt or pretend to doubt, that there was such a Man as *Mahomet*, who propagated his Imposture by the Force of Arms? Certainly there are at least as strong Proofs that the Apostles propagated Christianity by Miracles, as that *Mahomet* in a dark and unenlightened Age established his false Religion by Violence, Rapine, and the Power of the Sword. And if the Apostles did several Miracles by the Power of God; then they spoke and wrote with Authority *from* God; and consequently the Belief of their Doctrines is obligatory upon us.

In a Word, if there be any Moral Certainty for Matter of Fact, it is morally certain, that our Saviour and his Apostles wrought many Miracles;—It is morally certain, that God would not suffer many Miracles to be wrought to confirm an Imposture. —It is morally certain therefore that Christianity is no Imposture. And as for all the Objections against this Religion, they are of no Avail for this plain Reason, because they are Arguments against Matter of Fact. For when once it is morally certain, that a Thing *has been*, *viz.* that several Miracles *have been* wrought, all the Arguments and Objections
in

in the World cannot prove that it has not ^{SERM. I.} been.

The *Deists* have never offered any rational Scheme or tolerable Hypothesis to account for all the Marks of Credibility and strong Appearances of Truth and Divinity in the Christian *Revelation* (supposing nothing more than *Human* concerned in the Publication, Propagation and Establishment of it) any more than the *Atheists* have offered any plausible Scheme to solve all the Appearances of Goodness, Wisdom and Design in the *Creation*, without supposing an infinitely wise and good God, the Author and Preserver of it. They are obliged to admit of a Fact, *viz.* the speedy and amazing Progress of the Gospel, of which it is impossible for them to give any Account, when not only a possible, but an easy and satisfactory Account may be given of it. They are obliged to allow that an Effect was brought about without a Cause, or what is the same Thing, without a Cause proportionate to it, when a Cause equal to the Effect may be easily assigned. Our Saviour's Command to the Apostles, *Go and teach all Nations*, would have been as ridiculous without a Certainty of Divine Assistance, as if he had bid them, *Go, and subdue all Nations by the Force of Arms*. Nor could it have been done without a proper Furniture of a great Variety of Languages, so as to enable them to con-

SERM. I.

verse easily and fluently every where with the Persons, to whom they addressed themselves, in their several respective Tongues. If it be said that their Knowledge of *Greek* alone might qualify them for this Undertaking, it being then an universal Language, and *spoke*, or at least *understood* every where; I answer, it is plain from a remarkable Place in *Cæsar's Commentaries* *, that it was not: That great General writing to *Quintus Cicero* his Lieutenant in *Greek*, for Fear, if his Letter were intercepted, the Enemy should gain Intelligence of his Designs.

A Man must be either very *careless* or very *laborious* to be an Unbeliever. He must labour very hard and struggle against Conviction to darken and pervert the strongest Evidences, and to discolour his genuine Sense of Things: or he must have been so careless as never to have spent any Thought at all upon the Matter, but have taken his Infidelity upon Trust and at second Hand, But to be a Believer, where there is such a Fulness of Evidence, is the most easy, natural State of the Mind.

I have now dispatched the first and second Heads of my Discourse, as far as the Time would permit, and hasten

* Lib. V. XLVIII. Edit. Davis. Polyæni, Stratagemat. Lib. VIII. Cap. XXIII.

III^{dly}, To conclude with a short Reflection on the Importance of Christianity, and our Insensibility of it's just Value. SERM. I.

If there be no future State of Happiness, of what Avail is it to think, or pretend to think freely? Unlimited Range and Freedom of Thought may be the Cry; but the Aim of every wise Man should in that Case be Freedom *from* Thought; since every Thought, that he could send abroad, would bring Home this melancholy Truth; that he was a miserable Creature, ever importunate in his Demands for Happiness, but never to have those Demands satisfied. But if there be a future State of Felicity, then Revelation must be of the utmost Importance to ascertain to us, what, when and where, and how long it is to be, and that the present State is our final State of Trial. Christianity, however important, has now been long a familiar and common Blessing, and has undergone the Misfortune of all other common Blessings, to be disregarded merely because it is so. To retrieve a just, or what is the same Thing, a great Esteem for it, as pure and unadulterated; it seems as if it were necessary that some gross Corruption of Religion should be substituted for a while in it's stead: as Sicknefs, or a Body full of Wounds and putrifying Sores, makes us know how to value, what we neglected before, the Blessings of Health and a vigo-

SERM. I.

rous Constitution. Christianity is like an Object held too close and near to us to be viewed in the best Light; it must be removed to some Distance from us, to be seen by us in the most advantageous Point of View. Then, however insensible we may be of it's *absolute* Value or Excellence, we shall at least discern it's *comparative* Worth; it's Worth compared with Mahometism, Enthusiasm and Paganism. It certainly is the most heavenly Religion that ever was, tending most of all to raise our Affections to Heaven, and therefore most worthy of the peculiar Interposition of Heaven, and most likely to have *come down from Heaven*, from that Being, from whom every *good and perfect Gift* descendeth. To whom, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c,

S E R M O N II.

Improbabilities not sufficient to invalidate Moral Certainty.

Preached before the University of Oxford. And afterwards at the Visitation at Andover, Sept. 11, 1745.

HEBREWS x. 23.

Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering: for he is faithful that promised.

“ **H**OW a Man may qualify himself, SERM. II.
“ so as to be able to settle his Principles and fix his Sentiments in Religious
“ Matters; and then to enjoy Tranquillity of
“ Mind, neither disturbing others, nor being
“ greatly disturbed at what passes among
“ them?” is a very interesting Query;
and it were to be wished that the Author*,
from whom, with some little Variations of
Expression, I have borrowed the Question,
had given us his Thoughts upon it; which

* See *Wollaston's Religion of Nature*, page 1. Quest. 3.
would

SERM. II.

would have carried him beyond the Bounds of *Natural Religion*, to which he confines himself. For the Insufficiency of *Natural Religion* to this Purpose has been fully shewn; and *Revelation* (supposing a thorough Conviction of it's Truth) sets the Mind at Rest in several very concerning Points, as to which, in a State of *Natural Religion*, it would be ever *seeking Rest and finding none*. Shall we then, dissatisfied, as every thinking Man must be, without better Assistances than *Natural Religion* furnishes, embrace the Belief of *Revelation*, as necessary to beget in us a firm Composure of Mind? This would do, if some Passages not easily cleared up and some seeming Improbabilities did not occur throughout the Records of it; if *specious Objections* both in Books and Conversation were not continually urged against it; which fill People's Heads with Doubts and Scruples, and their Minds with Uneasiness.

How then can a Man order Matters so, as to be fixed in his Principles, and easy in his Mind (which he cannot well be without being fixed in his Principles, as far as they relate to Matters of Importance) amidst all the Altercations and Disputes, which are, and perhaps ever will be, in Agitation, to the End of the World? This is a Question which nearly concerns us; and to come to any Satisfaction about it, the only Expedient
that

that offers itself is, to apprise ourselves of ^{SERM. II.} the Truth of the following Propositions.

Ist, That no *seeming Improbabilities*, no *Objections*, be they ever so numerous, provided they do not amount to an *absolute Impossibility*, ought to reverse an Assent, which is founded, as the Assent to Christianity is, upon *Moral Certainty*.

IIdly, That there does not appear any *absolute Impossibility* in the Contexture of the *Christian Revelation*. The Consequence of which is,

IIIdly, That a thinking Man may enjoy himself with perfect Ease and Tranquillity, in the Profession and Belief of Christianity; which he cannot do, if he think upon the Stretch, in a State of Infidelity.

I begin with the first of these Propositions, viz. That no *seeming Improbabilities*, no *Objections*, &c.

By *Moral Certainty* is meant such an Evidence, as, though it does not exclude a mere *abstract Possibility* of Things being otherwise, shuts out every reasonable Ground of suspecting, that they are so; an Evidence which we cannot reject, without contradicting the common Sense and Reason of Man-kind.

SERM. II. kind. It is an Evidence of so high a Nature, that Men of plain Understandings generally confound it with *absolute Certainty*; and would be surprized to hear any Man assert that *it is only probable in the highest Degree*, that there is such a Country as *Italy*. Yet it is in the same Sense, that Philosophers must be understood, when they say, that it is only *highly probable*, that our Saviour and his Apostles wrought several uncontroled Miracles, by which they proved the Divinity of their Mission and the Truth of their Doctrines; meaning by *highly probable*, that it is *not capable of rigorous Demonstration*, it is *morally certain*, but not *scientifically* so. The Bulk of Mankind can well enough distinguish Certainty in general from Uncertainty: but to ascertain all the Boundaries and Degrees of Evidence, to fix precisely the Point, where absolute Certainty ends, and moral Certainty begins, is a Task, to which at least unimproved Capacities are not suited; like those common Machines, which serve well enough for all the Purposes of Life to inform one in general, how the Time passes, without pointing out to a Tittle the minutest and smallest Differences of Time.

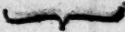
Taking it for granted (what every one who has written upon the Subject has proved) that Christianity is founded upon *moral Certainty*: it will follow, that, if we be
not

not absolutely secure from a *physical Possibility* of Error; we are certainly secure from the Guilt and *Immorality* of Error in embracing it. For He at least stands clear of Immorality and Guilt, who acts agreeably to the Will of his Creator; and he acts agreeably to his Will, who is determined by *moral Certainty*: Because unless moral Certainty were allowed to be a proper and rational Ground of Conviction, all Administration of Justice must cease; all Truth and Commerce stagnate; and such a Scene of Confusion be opened, as must be highly disagreeable to God, who is a *God of Order and not of Confusion*. God formed us social Creatures: now we cannot act as social Creatures, without some Degree of mutual Trust reposed in one another; and no mutual Trust can be reposed in one another, if those are not to be depended upon who gave, as the Apostles and primitive Martyrs did give, the strongest Proofs of their Integrity. The numerous Converts to Christianity in the first Century could not have believed it to be true, if it had been false. For not to mention other Things, they must have had an inward Consciousness, whether they had received those miraculous Gifts or not; for the Abuse and Misapplication of which St. Paul, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, reproves and censures them. They must have had an

SERM. II.

SERM. II. *an absolute* Certainty, supposing no extraordinary Gifts were communicated to them, that he from whom they received their Religion, and whose Epistles, as appears from *St. Peter* and others, were universally read as of divine Authority, was a shameless Impostor. And yet they could not have professed the Belief of it, knowing it to be an Imposture, at a Time when Christians were of all Men most miserable, without any Prospect of worldly Honour or Advantage, but with a certain Expectation of exquisite Torments; except upon a Supposition, that they loved Misery and avoided Happiness *as such*. In a Word, Society must disband upon the same absurd Principle, whereby some labour the Subversion of Christianity, *viz.* the Denial of the Force and Validity of *moral* Certainty. Rigorous and strict Demonstrations resemble precious Stones; with whatever Lustre and Brightness of Evidence they may shine, they cannot be purchased without great Expence of Thought; and when they are purchased, they are not always necessary for the Uses of common Life. Whereas Moral Evidence is like current Species: It is current Proof on which the Stamp of Credibility is fixed, and by which the common Business of Life is carried on.

Though we have not an absolute Certainty that we *cannot err*, yet we have an
absolute

absolute Certainty that we *do not sin*, in SERM. II.
yielding our Assent to such moral Proofs, 
as Christianity is supported by. And when
this transient Scene is closed, the grand
Question may be, as far as Matters of
Belief are concerned, not whether the Doc-
trines which we embraced had their Foun-
dation in the Truth and Reality of Things,
but whether the Evidence, upon which we
embraced them, was of an obligatory Na-
ture or not: since if it were of an obligato-
ry Nature, then, though they should prove
to be false, yet we may be as much the Ob-
jects of the divine Displeasure for rejecting
them, as if they had been true. For we
may certainly be justly punished for not
complying with such Evidence, as God has
laid us under an Obligation to submit to, and
to which we do, without any Hesitation,
submit in the highest Concernments of Life.

What has been hitherto advanced, pro-
ceeds upon a Supposition, that such Evi-
dence may *possibly misguide* us: but if we
take the Veracity and Goodness of God
into the Account, we may advance a
Step higher in the Scale of Certainty,
and arrive at such a determined Pro-
portion of it, as no Improbabilities can
destroy the Force and Weight of it. For let
there be never so many Improbabilities in
Christianity, yet as long as they are but *Im-*
probabilities, and do not amount to a *direct*
Im-

SERM. II. *Impossibility* in the Nature of the Thing, then there is no absolute Impossibility but some rational Solution of them may be given : but it is absolutely impossible in the Nature of the Thing, and contradictory to our Ideas of God, that he should mislead us, or, which is the same Thing, necessitate us to be governed by such Evidence, as must mislead us, in Points of the last Importance. If a Faith, which is built upon moral and indubitable Proofs, should be erroneous, then he who has made it our bounden Duty, by the Exigences of human Affairs and by the Laws of our Nature, to close with such Proofs, designed it should be so ; and consequently must be, in the last Resort, the Author of Error ; to assert which is Blasphemy. We are reduced to no Absurdity in embracing several Things as true, upon just and legitimate Proofs ; which, antecedently to such Proofs, we should have rejected as highly incredible and improbable : for such an Assent is warranted by the same Procedure in every Branch of Literature, and even in that Branch which requires the strictest Certainty, as is plain from the Case of *Infinities* of all Sorts. But we are reduced to a Train of Absurdities of the worst Sort, by withholding our Assent from what is founded upon moral Certainty ; since if that Opinion were universal, it would cause an intire Cessation

fation of Business, and introduce Disorder SERM. II.
 and Misery into the Creation, contrary to
 the Intention of our great Creator, and
 therefore contrary to Truth. Whatever
 Weight some People may think the Objec-
 tions against Christianity have; they can
 have little or no Weight comparatively with
 the Force of this Argument, which is an
indirect Demonstration in Favour of it:
viz. Christianity must be true, because the
 Supposition of its not being so, carries along
 with it gross and palpable Absurdities; it
 implies a Disbelief of every Thing of which
 we were not Eye-witnesses; it puts an End
 to the Credibility of all human Testimony,
 and plunges us into a State of Scepticism in
 Matters of Practice; far more to be avoided
 than that which relates to Matters of
 mere Theory. It supposes, that several
 thousands of early Christians, who could
 not have been deceived, as to the Reality
 of those Miracles which fell under the im-
 mediate Cognizance of their Senses, entered
 into a Combination to make the rest of the
 World believe they were thoroughly
 persuaded of the Truth of them and of
 Christianity, by persisting in it to the last,
 without any Interest and even against their
 Interest.

Farther, we must distinguish between
 the *Proofs of a Thing*, and the *Thing said to*
be proved. All Objections which relate

D

merely

SERM. II.

merely to the Nature of the Thing proved, but do not affect the Proofs themselves, ought not to invalidate our Assent. For our *Assent* is built upon the *Proofs*; and, while *they* continue firm and unshaken, it ought to be so too; and nothing but what destroys the Force of the Arguments, by which a Thing is proved to be true, can prove it to be false. It is thus in Natural Philosophy: when once the annual Motion of the Earth round the Sun is proved, we do not alter our Opinion, because it seems highly improbable and to shock our common natural Notions, that so cumbersome and unwieldy a Body as the Earth should move some hundreds of Miles in a Minute, and some thousands in an Hour, with a Velocity unperceived by us, and yet more rapid than that of a Cannon Ball. Thus again, when it is proved that Light comes from the Sun; we do not suspect the Proof to be ill-grounded, because it is inconceivable how any Body (and Light is a Body) should travel several Millions of Miles in seven or eight Minutes; that the Sun should emit every Minute as many Corpuscles, as have been sufficient to diffuse themselves throughout the whole Expanse of the visible Creation for almost six thousand Years, without any sensible Diminution of its Bulk, without impoverishing itself by such a long continued Expence of Rays. Thus several Things

Things relating to the Spring of the Air, ^{SERM. II.} the Reflexion and Refraction of the Rays of Light, Magnetism, &c. are admitted to be true upon the Testimony of Experimental Philosophers, without their own personal Knowledge, by those who would have thought them not a little absurd, independently of such Testimony. In a Word, let a Man have never so romantic an Imagination, it could not enter into his Heart to believe, or into his Head to conceive those astonishing and incredible Things, which are done in the Universe by him *who only is wonderful and only doth wonderful Things*; unless his Eye had seen them, or his Reason demonstrated them, or his Ear had heard them from several Persons of great Abilities and unsuspected Credit. Whatever Absurdities some imagine they see in the Scriptures; it is the greatest Absurdity of all, that they who do not know any Thing in the Course of Nature, no not so much as the Falling of a Stone, but what baffles, confounds, and surpasses all their reasoning Powers, should refuse to believe any Thing in God's Revelation and extraordinary Dispensations, that does so. It appears then that an *Improbability* arising from the *Nature of the Thing* may be overcome and over-ruled by *direct positive Proofs*. The Reason is obvious; the *Nature of Things* is in a great Measure in

SERM. II. the Dark, their internal Constitution and Essence in a great Degree unknown, and because unknown, beset with a great many Difficulties, which, though not irreconcilable in themselves, may seem to us to be so. But *the Proofs for the Reality* of the Things whose internal Nature baffles the Understanding, may lie so open to our Apprehensions; may be so clear and substantial, as justly to demand the Assent of every intelligent Person. Exceptions against the Proofs of revealed Religion ought to be seriously considered, and have been, I think, fully answered. But as long as the *Proofs* are *unexceptionable*, all *other* Exceptions against it are of little Force; provided they do not imply any *Impossibility* or any *Immorality*. For it is demonstrable, that we cannot fully comprehend every Thing that God may reveal, nor the whole Scheme of the Christian Dispensation; it is demonstrable, that we must be insufficient Judges of what we cannot fully comprehend; and it is demonstrable, that no great Stress is to be laid upon the Exceptions of an insufficient Judgment. But our Insufficiency, which takes off the Force of the Objections, does not annul or make void the *Proofs*; because the *Proofs* for Christianity being external are what they are, extrinsically and independently of the Nature of the Thing proved.

The

The Substance of what I would say is, that SERM. II.
if there be any such Thing as proper and undoubted Certainty of Fact, there is such a moral Certainty for those Facts which support Christianity, not to mention a Variety of other substantial and concurrent Proofs. Now we cannot resist the Strength of moral Certainty, without offering a Violence to Nature, and committing a Force upon it: we do not resist it in any other Case besides *that* of Religion; and if we do it in *that*, it must be owing to some irregular Passion which hangs a wrong Bias upon us: the Man must struggle hard, and labour not to be convinced, who is not convinced by it. There is a strong Propension, interwoven in our Frame and Constitution, to surrender ourselves without Reserve to such Evidence. It seems to be the Voice of God speaking within us; whose Intention it never could be, that his Creatures should continue, as to Matters of Practice, in a pendulous State of Mind, quite unbalanced and ever-wavering, without a Possibility of coming to a fixed Resolve, which they might abide by: which yet must have been the Case in most Affairs, if moral Certainty were not allowed to be sufficient to ensure our Conviction. The Case is the same as to strong *Appearances* of Truth, as it is as to Miracles. It has been often proved that God would never suffer a Train of Miracles to be wrought in

SERM. II. Favour of Falshood: he would not suffer such a Snare to be laid for Mankind without disabusing them by working those of a superior Nature in Opposition to it. Just so by Parity of Reason, we may conclude, that he would never suffer so many bright Appearances of Truth from the Propagation of the Gospel, from the Completion of Prophecies, &c. to be affixed to a Forgery; he would never suffer those Facts which give an incontestable Sanction to the Doctrines of Christianity (supposing it an Imposture) to come recommended to us by as strong Marks and Characters of Credibility, as any distant Matter of Fact can have, and stronger than any other has; without giving us something of superior Force, some clear Demonstration of the Falshood of it, to prevent us from being betrayed, which we should otherwise inevitably be, into an Error. Supposing an infinitely good Being at the Helm, he would not permit his Creatures, who are designed for *Action* and not merely for *Speculation*, to be distracted with equal Appearances of Truth in Points of the last Importance, so as that the Mind should hang in an even Poise between two Propositions. There must be some prepollent Evidence in all such Cases to vindicate God's Goodness, and to turn the Scales. Now where there is a very high Degree of Moral Certainty, nothing can preponderate

rate or overbalance it, but absolute infal-
libe Certainty. It must be consequently
the Will of our Creator that we should
acquiesce in Christianity as enforced by a
strong Moral Certainty, if

SERM. II.

Idly, There does not appear any *absolute Impossibility* in the Contexture of it—or any *strict Demonstration* that it is false, and that too in Things of Importance.

But this it's most *early* and *virulent* Adversaries never have shewn. A demonstrative Proof that they could not do it: their very Silence is a strong Argument in Favour of it's Truth; and by alledging so little against it, they have made it clear that they had nothing material to alledge. If Infidels have any Thing of this Nature, let them produce it: let them set out with some self-evident Principle, and from thence go on gradually with a necessary Connection of Ideas, till by a Chain of close Reasoning, there being a strict Coherence all along, they come to the Conclusion; or let them prove that Christianity authorizes and enjoins some gross Immorality: For it is a Demonstration, that a Religion which authorizes Immorality cannot have the Sanction of a perfectly pure and holy God. If they have not any Thing of this Nature, then, as I have proved before, no Difficulties or even Improbabilities ought to over-rule strong

SERM. II. and undoubted positive Evidence : And the Reasons for Christianity are so many, clear, and forcible, that they will, and must, and ought to sway the Minds of reasonable, unprejudiced and good Men. One Demonstration, and nothing less than Demonstration, would effectually disprove it. For one Demonstration would beget infallible Certainty, and twenty Demonstrations could not do more than beget infallible Certainty, which does not admit of Degrees. The Understanding could not yield its Assent as a Volunteer. It would be pressed into the Service of Infidelity, and compelled, however reluctant, to come in. But this is a Task only fit for that adventurous Genius who pretended to have by him a Demonstration against the Being of God. At present the Deists virtually confess, they have nothing of this Sort to level against a Religion which has stood the Trial of many successive Ages, by being humbly content to take up with any plausible Plea that carries but the Face of an Argument, a kind of Hypocrisy in Argumentation, which has the mere Form and Outside of Reasoning, without the Power and Energy thereof. They have recourse to low Evasions, false Quotations, Misrepresentations ; poor artificial Props, which a firm substantial Building needs not, and a ruinous Building cannot long be supported by. They have

have been most loud and clamorous in the Charge of Contradictions as to the mysterious Doctrines of Christianity, and particularly that of the Trinity, pretending to nothing less than a Demonstration of the Absurdity of it. Whereas on the other Hand there is a Demonstration, that the Doctrine of the Trinity does not imply any express and plain Contradiction. Because plain and express Contradictions lie as level to the Understanding as plain Truths do. Now the Doctrine of the Trinity relates to the internal Nature of the Deity, and his intrinsic Manner of Existence, what Differences it may admit of consistently with the Unity of Essence: but what relates to the internal Nature of God, to which our Faculties bear no Proportion, cannot lie level to the Understanding: his Nature must be *like the great Deep*, unfathomable by us, though his *Righteousness* and Moral Attributes stand *like the strong Mountains* visible to every Eye. While they charge the Doctrine of the Trinity with a Contradiction, they are guilty of one themselves, in allowing the Divine Nature internally, as it is in itself, to be incomprehensible and far above out of their Sight, and yet pretending to see clearly what is far above out of their Sight; in pretending to discern fully and perfectly an Impossibility in the Nature of the Thing, where the only Impossibility is,

SERM. II. is, that they should discern any Thing at all fully and perfectly. All the Confusion arises from not distinguishing between *Ideas of Intellect*, and *Ideas of Imagination*: several Things may not be absolutely *unintelligible* that are yet utterly *unimaginable*, or to which no Images belong. Thus we understand (and can demonstrate what we understand) that something must have existed from all Eternity. But when the Imagination would lay hold on some Idea to represent it, it can lay hold on none, but what labours under a Complication of Absurdities: it cannot conceive any Being to exist without successive Duration. Now Eternity in the Sense of successive Duration, cannot be a necessary Attribute of God; since that cannot be necessary, no two Parts of which ever existed together. Duration past is no more, that which is to come is not yet in Being; the present Moment only exists; yet while we are speaking it is gone and has ceased to be. And since no Part of successive Duration can be necessary, the whole of it cannot be so. A successive, changing, and fleeting Duration cannot therefore be attributed to him, whose Existence is unchanging, permanent, and necessary; not to mention that an infinite successive Duration implies an infinite Number of Years, an infinite Number is a last Number, a Number so great that you

cannot add to it, which is a Contradiction. SERM. II.
God's unbounded Duration cannot differ from ours merely in *Degree*, since what is infinite and unbounded admits of no Degrees: it must differ therefore in *Nature* and *Kind*: and if so, it follows, that what would imply a Contradiction, when predicated of a finite Nature, may, in some Cases, be none with respect to the divine; the Contradiction being not *ad idem*. Thus for Instance it is a Contradiction to say, that *we* have not existed longer to Day, than we had Yesterday; but it is no Contradiction as to *that* Being, *with whom a thousand Years are but as one Day, and one Day as a thousand Years*. For the Deity had existed a whole Eternity Yesterday, and can have existed no more than a whole Eternity to Day: or in other Words, unlimited Duration cannot be lengthened or shortened; because, what can be lengthened or shortened, enlarged or narrowed, must have Limits. It is demonstrable therefore, that what has existed from Eternity must exist in a Manner quite different from what we do, and of which we can have no Ideas. And if so, what crude indigested Notices must they entertain, who can argue, that because three separate *human* Persons are three Beings, therefore three *divine* Persons must be so too? In short the divine Nature not only infinitely transcends our Nature,
it

SERM. II.

it infinitely transcends our very Conceptions of it: the Deity not being only infinitely above what we are, he is infinitely above what we can think of him. If we would silence our Imagination, a delusive Faculty, and listen to the Voice of cool Reason, we should perceive no absolute Impossibility that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, though distinct from each other, and subsisting in a different Manner, may be undivided; and to what is undivided and incapable of any Disunion, we may, with at least as strict Propriety of Speech, ascribe the Denomination of *one Being*, as we can to any Thing, of which we have a positive Idea, in the whole Universe.

Again, the Understanding may perceive that it implies no Contradiction, that there may be such a Relation in the divine Nature, as, according to our poor and low Ways of thinking and speaking, greatly disproportioned to the Originals which they should represent, is best shadowed out to us by that of a Son to a Father, to which it may bear some faint Resemblance. But the Imagination falls immediately to work, and ascribing it to the Deity in as strict a Sense, as when it is applied to the human Nature, forms as many absurd Conclusions, its own Workmanship, as it does, when it argues from our successive Duration to, what is infinitely different from it, the Duration of God.

God. Whatever Absurdities some People SERM. II.
may fancy upon this Subject, they have all
been occasioned by this, that they have con-
founded Strength of *Reason*, and Strength
of *Imagination*: they did not perceive any
Disagreement in the Ideas themselves, Ideas
of pure Understanding, they only per-
ceived a Disagreement in the Ideas of
Imagination which it borrows from created
and even material Beings; whereas it is
evident that no Ideas of the Imagination,
none but those of pure Intellect, ought to be
employed, except by Way of Figure, in
describing a pure intellectual and spiritual
Being. Something like this happens in the
Point of God's Omnipresence. The Un-
derstanding clearly proves, that the Deity
must be present to every Thing, which he
made and governs. But the Imagination,
ever obtruding beyond its Sphere, is impa-
tient to bring down this Doctrine to its own
Level; and not being able to conceive the
Presence of any Being that is unextended,
it considers the Deity under the gross Idea
of infinite Extension, of infinite Length,
Breadth, and Height; and then a nume-
rous Train of Contradictions break in upon
us; as that Extension implies Parts; that
Parts by the very Term imply Imperfec-
tion, which cannot belong to an All-perfect
Being; that there must be as many distinct
Consciousnesses as there are distinct Parts,

SERM. II.

and consequently an infinite Number of distinct Consciousnesses in what is infinitely extended. The only Remedy for which is to consider, that as there is a Demonstration that there is one spiritual Being which is present, so there is a Demonstration too, that he must be present in a Manner, about which we can imagine nothing at all; because no Imagery of a spiritual Being, or it's Presence, can be drawn on the Fancy, as that of material Beings is. It is thus too as to the Trinity. Though we have Ideas of Union and Distinction, and know well enough what we mean by them, when we apply them to the Divine Nature, yet those Ideas are so defective that we cannot exactly compare them: and, where our Ideas are so defective that we cannot exactly compare them, there we cannot have an evident Perception of a Contradiction or Disagreement of Ideas, which depends entirely on a full and exact Comparison of Ideas.

Arianism seems to be divided from *Deism*, and that again from *Atheism*, by thin Partitions. The Man who is obstinate in the Disbelief of his Saviour's Godhead, must be, one would think, strongly tempted to reject the Scriptures, as a Book big with Blasphemy, since every Idea distinctive of God from his Creatures is there expressly ascribed to him; unless Paternity, a
mere

mere Relation of Order, be the distinctive Idea of God; which yet is so far from implying any Inferiority, that it proves the very Reverse. For unless *only Son* and *only begotten* should signify the *only created* (the Consequence of which would be, that our Saviour is the *only* Creature in the Universe) it must follow, that he is *un-created* and of the same Nature with his Father. Well, supposing him now turned *Deist*; the Transition from thence to *Atheism* or *Scepticism* would be almost unavoidable, because Eternity, Omnipresence, and Foreknowledge are encumbered with as great Difficulties as the Doctrine of the Trinity. Some Writers, who set out with opposing the Divinity of the Son, have at last, by a natural Gradation of Error, ended in combating the Prescience of God; and made at least very near Approaches to *Atheism*. For next to believing there is no such Thing as an infinitely perfect Being; the greatest Absurdity is to believe, there is an infinitely perfect and wise Being, who does not know, what Tomorrow, nay what the next Hour may bring forth. And indeed I do not know whether the Denial of any one fundamental Truth might not, if pursued to its utmost Consequences, lead or rather mislead one, by a just Train of Deductions,

SERM. II. tions, to the Rejection of every other, that
 is so.

One would undoubtedly wish for some fixed Anchor, some Haven and secure Situation, when one sees and hears of so many who have either made Shipwreck of their Faith, or are driving at the Mercy of the Wind: which can be only this: that Moral Certainty is a sufficient Ground of a full Assurance, where there appears no absolute Impossibility to overbalance it, as there does not in the Case of Christianity. The Consequence of which is,

*III*dly, That a thinking Man may enjoy himself, with perfect Ease and Tranquillity, in the Profession and Belief of Christianity, which he could not do, if he thought upon the Stretch, in a State of Infidelity.

For he will find every comfortable Doctrine, which a good Man could wish to be true, actually proved to be so by those Arguments which demand the Assent of every wise and unprejudiced Person. He will perceive, that there are several Points, which are necessary to be determined in order to come at any tolerable Satisfaction and Repose of Mind, but yet are undeterminable by any internal Evidences from the Nature of the Thing: and he will perceive,

ceive, that where Reason from inward Evi- SERM. II.
dences fails us most, there the Scripture
has been most exprefs, particular and full,
as if it had been written on Purpose to sup-
ply the Deficiencies of Reason, as well as
authoritatively to enforce the Discoveries of
it. He thinks that as God designed Man-
kind in general should be governed by Re-
ligion, that Religion has the fairest Preten-
sions to Truth, which is suited to Man-
kind in general. Now a System of moral
and religious Truths delivered in easy, short
and compendious Precepts, and proved to
have the Stamp of divine Authority upon it
by a Certainty of Fact, is much better
suited to Mankind in general, than what
depends upon ideal and abstract Reasonings.
For the Bulk of Mankind can much more
easily apprehend the Credibility of Testi-
mony and of public notorious Facts, than
they can the Force of metaphysical Argu-
ments drawn out to any Length; or judge
whether Consequences, after several Re-
moves from their first Principles, have all
the Virtue and Strength of those first Prin-
ciples conveyed to them. Take away Faith
and Authority, and you take away the
very Basis, upon which Religion, Mora-
lity, and common Honesty must stand
among the Generality of our Species; who,
though they may, by a due Use of com-
mon Sense, perceive a gross and palpable
E Absur-

SERM. II. Absurdity, and therefore may guard against the Impositions of Popery, yet cannot positively ascertain by the Use of their unassisted Faculties, the most necessary Truths. It is therefore an additional Comfort to a serious Christian to consider that he is acting in Concert with that Being, who wills the Happiness of all Mankind, by countenancing, encouraging, and adorning that Religion, which is best adapted to the Exigencies of Mankind in general.

On the other Hand, can an inquisitive, thinking Man be perfectly serene and undisturbed, who has revolted from Christianity, and *forsoaken the Guide of his Youth*? He must be very sanguine to think he can demonstrate Christianity to be certainly false. The utmost Lengths, I conceive, a cool Unbeliever, who has studied the Point, can go, is to attempt to prove, that it may not be certainly true: and if this be all, how great must his Inquietude be? And this is perhaps the only assignable Reason, why Infidels are more industrious, *compassing Sea and Land, to make Profelytes*, than the Generality of Christians seem to be, who enjoy their Opinions and themselves, without *being instant in Season and out of Season* to propagate them. The Truth is, a sound and rational Believer, like a good Man, is *satisfied in and from himself*. The Perception of Truth, it matters

ters not whether from internal or external SERM. II.
Evidences, gives him a genuine Complacency, and an inward Feeling that all is right within, as to the main Points of Belief. Whereas thoughtful Men who are in any pernicious Error, must look out for that Satisfaction, which they cannot feel at Home in their own Breasts, elsewhere from the Number, Countenance and Approbation of their Followers; looking upon every new Convert, whom they gain, as a confirming Circumstance in Favour of their Opinions. A poor and slender Confirmation! For those very Men who are insensibly drawn into the very Depth of Wrong-thinking, would have been shocked if they had opened their whole Scheme at first. They do not attempt to pour in all their Tenets at once, lest they should fall to the Ground and be lost. They infuse them into the Mind as by a narrow Opening or Inlet, by Degrees, Drop after Drop, till they have made them to receive the most noisom Dregs of Error. They *in the Beginning set forth* their most plausible and colourable Opinions, *and when Men have well drank in them, then those which are worse.* Thus Men are led from one Falshood to another, till they fall into *Fatalism*, the last Sink of poisonous Notions; into which all gross Errors, after they have gone their utmost Lengths and run their Course, at last empty themselves.

SERM. II.

A benevolent Man that is at Ease in himself would not designedly let a Line appear in Print, or a Word fall in Conversation, that should stagger the Good in their Way to Heaven, or confirm the Bad in a Course of Wickedness: he would not for all the World write or say any Thing, that should tend to weaken the Motives to Honesty and Virtue, by striking at the Authority of that Book, from which alone a full Assurance of unallayed, exceeding, and endless Happiness (the strongest Support of Virtue and Honesty) can be derived. Can a Man that is a Friend to Natural Religion, endeavour to subvert a Revelation, which contains all the Motives to Goodness which Natural Religion has, and adds some distinguishing ones of great Weight peculiar to itself? Or can he really think that Natural Religion would succeed in its Room? No, There would be as many Schemes of Religion, as there are opinionated Men, who wanted to form a Party. And that Proposition would have very uncommon bad Fortune, which could meet with no Friends to countenance and stand up for it. Men are very well agreed that several Duties are enjoined by Christianity, who would have endless Disputes, whether they were Parts of Natural Religion or not. Reason, abstractedly from Revelation,

tion, does not prove many certain Points; SERM. II.
 and the Mind of Man finds itself disposed to believe a great many more, provided it could prove them. There will be, Christianity once set aside, a mighty Void left in it, which Reason of itself cannot fill up. *Paganism, Enthusiasm, and Superstition* on the one Hand; a formless undetermined Thing that calls itself *personal Religion, Manichæism, Atheism, and Fatalism* on the other; would be striving to erect themselves upon it's Ruins, till at last the Populace ran into Superstition in Variety of Forms, and the Gentry into no Religion at all. What has been said of the Dissolution of a well-constituted Government, is as applicable to the Dissolution of Christianity: it would resemble the Putrefaction of a dead Animal, when, instead of one noble Creature; as it was while Life held it together, there would be a thousand little nauseous Reptiles preying upon it, each crawling in a Path of its own.

An humane Person cannot reflect without deep Concern on the Impressions which are made upon an honest undesigning but weak Man, when he lights upon the Books, or falls into the Company of artful Infidels: Where there is a good Disposition at the Bottom, they shall serve his Faith, just as the Robbers

SERM. II.

did the Traveller in the Parable of the Samaritan; they shall not kill and destroy it entirely, which would be almost a Kindness in Comparison, but *they shall leave it wounded and half-dead*. He shall have afterwards several uneasy Sensations, and ungrateful Feelings within, before he can recover an established Health of Soul. He shall go on drooping and diffident without that chearful Assurance which he had before, in his Journey through this World to a better.

But, whatever others do, let us unite our vigorous and animated Endeavours in espousing the Cause and promoting the Interests of Christianity. Let us not be indolent, or, like the Disciples of old, *asleep* while they are going to *crucify our Lord and Master*, or, which is one Kind of crucifying him, to root out his Religion from off the Face of the Earth. But *let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering*, and confirm the Faith, that is wavering, of others, by our Discourse, by our Pens, and by (what is sometimes the most effectual Confirmation of all) our Lives suitable to our Holy Faith: then *faithful will he be, who has promised* to his faithful Servants eternal Happiness: Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

S E R M O N III.

The usual Objections against Revelation, founded in Ignorance.

In two Sermons preached before the University of Oxford.

I C O R. i. 25.

*The Foolishness of God is wiser than Men;
and the Weakness of God is stronger
than Men.*

IT was no unusual Thing among the Ancients, as might be shewn by Instances brought from approved Authors, to call Things, not as they were in themselves, but as they appeared, or were esteemed to be by others. Agreeably to this Custom St. Paul, in the 28th Verse of this Chapter, calls Things accounted as nothing, *Things that are not*. And here he styles that *Foolishness* and *Weakness*, which was deemed to be so by the *Greeks*, though it was far otherwise in Reality.

The *Deists* have never offered any rational Scheme, or tolerable Hypothesis, to

S E R M.
III.

account for all the strong Marks of Credibility and Appearances of Truth and Divinity in Christianity, supposing nothing more than human concerned in the Publication and Propagation of it; any more than the *Atheists* have advanced any plausible Scheme to solve all the Appearances of Goodness, Wisdom, and Design in the Creation, without supposing an infinitely wise and good God the Author and Preserver of it. What the *Deists* object to Christianity, is just what the *Atheists* do in Regard to the Creation; instead of producing any consistent Theory to take off these Appearances of its Divinity, they endeavour to balance them by counter Appearances; Appearances of something wrong, irregular, or amiss in the Contexture of it. They tell us, it contains several Things which could not have been in it, if it had come from God. It will not be improper therefore,

Ist, To shew, that it is owing to Ignorance, that several Things in Revelation seem liable to the Charge of Foolishness.

IIdly, To advance a Step farther, and prove, that God has stamped the brightest Characters of Divinity on those Parts of Revelation, which are thought most exceptionable.

IIIIdly,

III^{dly}, That supposing, but not granting, there were some Inconsistencies in little incidental Matters, and Points of no Consequence; Christianity nevertheless would stand upon a firm Basis, as long as the principal Evidences for it remain unshaken, and the weightier Matters are worthy of God.

S E R M.
III.

Ist, then, I am to shew, that it is owing to Ignorance, &c.

It has been Matter of Surprize to some, that *Infidelity* should spread, even among Men, who are sensible and knowing in all other Respects. The Age has been complimented as a *discerning* and *inquisitive* Age; and so it may be, but certainly, generally speaking, it is not *inquisitive* into *scriptural* Learning, whatever it may be into other Branches of Literature. This seems a Province too much neglected, in Proportion as other Regions of Science have been cultivated. Yet without a sufficient Furniture of this Kind, a Person of very good Sense is by no Means qualified to sit in Judgment upon the *Bible*. The Truth of the Matter is, Men must either be content to rest in *Generals*, I mean, the Evidences of Revelation, and the Reasonableness of it, as to the main Substance and Design of it; as the middling Part of Mankind most commonly do: Or, if they will enter into Particulars, they should do, what

S E R M.
III.

too many of them do not, enter into them thoroughly with all proper Helps, and sift Things to the Bottom with an Attention proportioned to the Importance of the Subject. I will not deny, that some Men of Abilities may have done this, and yet continue *Infidels* still: But this I will venture to say, there are not more Men of this Stamp, than there were in the last Age of those, who, though incredulous in every other Respect, were firm Believers in *judicial Astrology*: There are not more in Number, than there are Searchers after the *Philosopher's Stone*, and *perpetual Motion*. If the Light of the Gospel be lost to any one, after due Care and Application, it is lost commonly upon dark, unhappy, and involved Souls; which smother the Evidences, that support, enliven, and invigorate every good Christian. I would not, however, pass too general and undistinguishing a Censure; great Allowances are to be made in many Cases, and especially for those, who have been early tinged with *Infidelity*, through the Default of their Education. Poisonous Notions may be instilled, or get Admittance into the ductile and tender Mind, as little Insects do into Amber, before it has that Firmness, Solidity, and Consistency, which is necessary to hinder them from insinuating themselves: And, like them too, when they have got into

into it, they cannot, without much Difficulty, be removed. The Mind hardens and retains them after, as so many Proofs, that it was once weak, unstable, and unre-
sisting as Water.

S E R M.
III.

Let us suppose a Person of fine Natural Parts, not a little improved by polite Reading, by an enlarged Conversation, and by his great Knowledge of the World. But then it is of the World, as it is at present; for he may know no more of it as past long ago, than he does of that which is to come. How easily may he, notwithstanding his Abilities, be tempted to Infidelity; if, when he looks into his Bible, instead of considering that he is, in some Parts of it, stepping back into the very remotest Scenes of Antiquity, and travelling, as it were, into another World, quite different from this; he sits down and *tries* (no wonder he *condemns*) Authors, who were born and bred in another Age and Country, by Laws, to which they were utter Strangers, the Laws of Writing which obtain at present in our Country? How natural will it be for him, in the Fulness of his Sufficiency, to treat with Contempt such Passages as this: *Moab is my Wash-pot, over Edom will I cast out my Shoe*; and to ask, with a supercilious and decisive Air, whether a Person, assisted by the Divine Spirit, could write in such a homely
3 and

S E R M.
III.

and coarse Manner? But his Contempt for this, and many other Places of Scripture, would abate, if he would study the Nature and early Use of *Hieroglyphics*, which gave a Tincture to the Conversation and Writings of those Times: So that a *Washpot*, which was used as a significant *Characteristic Mark*, became, when Letters more generally supplied the Use of Symbols, a *Characteristic Appellation*, to denote a Nation reduced to the most abject State, and employed in the most contemptible Offices. And as for *Casting out the Shoe*, he might find Reason to think, that, as some have observed, That was the ancient Form of taking Possession of any Country, or even Piece of Ground, in Allusion to that of *Moses*: *Every Place, on which the Soles of your Feet shall tread, shall be yours.* Or perhaps, *casting out the Shoe*, might only signify shaking off the Dust of one's Feet, as an Indication of that Neglect and Contempt which the *Edomites* deserved. No Wonder some should cavil at the *Prophetical* Schemes of Speech as strange and ridiculous, when a celebrated *Roman Historian* * could ascribe those pompous Titles to the absurd Pride of the *Persian King*, which we may, with some Probability, suppose were authorised by the common Language of the *Orientals*, and took their Birth from *hieroglyphic* Ima-

* Ammianus Marcellinus.

gery, viz. † “ *Sapores*, Brother to the Sun S E R M.
III.
“ and Moon, and Relation to the Stars, to
“ his Brother *Constantius Cæsar* :” It being
no more unusual, or out of the Way, for the
Eastern People to characterize the Heads of
a Nation, nay even of a private Family (as
appears by *Jacob*’s Interpretation of *Joseph*’s
Dream) by the Sun and Moon, and the
Nobility by the Stars ; than it would be now
to call a late eminent Writer the Light of
the Philosophical World. And Authors
must conform to the Laws of Composition
then in Being ; otherwise they will be as
short-lived, as Authors ; as those Subjects,
who will act in Opposition to the Statutes
and Edicts then in Force. Nay we often,
through our Ignorance, imagine we descry
a Blemish, which, upon maturer Considera-
tion, proves to be a considerable Beauty
and Elegance of Diction. Thus, *Destroy
this Temple, and in three Days I will
raise it up*, has been thought by some
to be a ridiculous and affected Way of
speaking ; and it might perhaps be so in
any other Person ; but in our blessed Saviour
it is perfectly just, and in Character. His
Body being the very Temple, of which the
other was only a Type, the very Temple,
in which the *Shechinah*, or Divine Presence,

† Rex Regum *Sapores* particeps Siderum, Frater
Solis & Lunæ, Constantio Cæsari Fratri meo Salutem.
taber-

SERM.
III.

tabernacled; the Temple, in which the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt substantially.

If we will not be at the Pains to consider the Nature and End of the *Mosaic Dispensation*, several Laws must appear unworthy of God, which are yet really suitable to his unerring Wisdom, as being necessary Preservatives against Idolatry (the Parent of Immorality) by the Prohibition of idolatrous Rites, which might mislead them into it. Thus, however trifling this Law might seem, viz. *The Woman shall not wear that which appertaineth to the Man, neither shall a Man put on a Woman's Garment*: for all that do so are an *Abomination unto the Lord thy God*; it appears, in this Light, perfectly reasonable; it being a Custom among the Heathen, as we learn from *Macrobius**, for the Men to worship *Venus* in Women's Habits, and Women in those of Men. Besides those Ceremonies which are *Emblematical*, and have an inward and spiritual Meaning, according to the early Method of conveying Instruction under the Veil of Types and Symbols; other Laws might be highly requisite, at that Juncture, to make it impracticable for the *Jews* even to eat with the *Gentiles*,

* *Philocorus* quoque in Attide eandem (Venerem) affirmat esse Lunam, & ei Sacrificium facere Viros cum veste Muliebri, Mulieres cum virili; quod eadem & Mas æstimatur & Foemina. *Macrob. Saturn. L. III. c. VIII.*

whose

whose idolatrous Ways they were too apt to learn: Laws forbidding them several Kinds of Food, which were allowed to the rest of the World, that so any Intercourse, which might expose them to Contagion, should be cut off. Folly, ductile as Water, flows in no unalterable Channel; but changes it's Course, and runs in new *Mæanders*, as the Humour and Fancy of Leading Men, in several Ages, turn and direct it. Hence several Prohibitions, intended to guard against some Absurdity, then predominant in the neighbouring Nations, seem not a little ridiculous now, when the *Memorial* of those Follies *is perished with them*. Some of the *Jewish* Laws are, in some Measure, unaccountable to us, for the same Reason that *Satire* is more hard to be understood by After-ages, than any *other* kind of Writing: Because *other* kinds of Writing are upon Subjects of a more fixed and unchanging Nature. But *Satire* dwells upon the Modes, Humours, vicious and ridiculous Customs, which prevailed when the Author wrote; Things very variable and changeable; in which Folly is ever shifting the Scene, and taking new Determinations. Unless the Follies of the present Age should be, some Way or other, conveyed to future Times, some of the most admired Writers at present, will appear to Posterity in a very odd Light, as to those

S E R M.
III.

S E R M.

III.

those Passages in which they expose the Fashions of Dress and Diversions. Nor can any Thing screen them from Censure, but what ought, for the same Reason, to exempt the sacred Writers, that a Vein of good Sense runs through every other Part; and the same Hands, which composed some Parts, being equally concerned in all, it ought to be presumed, that it extends likewise to those Passages, which lye under the Disadvantage of referring to Things now no longer known. We are thoroughly reconciled to Folly, as at present modified, which we see and hear of every Day; but can have no Notion of it, as it subsists under quite different Modifications, unless the Memory of it be preserved. And when we can have no Notion of the Folly, we can have none of those Laws which fenced against it; but are apt to censure them as arbitrary, capricious, and whimsical. Let a Man consider what exalted Ideas *Moses* every where inculcates of the *Deity*, and of the Worship due to Him; Let him read *Joseph's* Interview with his Brethren; and the Book of *Deuteronomy*, where the Spirit of the *Law-giver*, and the *Father* of his People, breathes in every Page; and then let him consider, whether it be not very possible, that *Moses* may have said many Things, which, through Length of Time, may be *unintelligible*; but utterly impossible,

fible, that so great a Writer could say any Thing grossly and palpably *absurd*.

SERM.
III.

The Misfortune is, People sit down to read such ancient Books as the Scriptures, with Heads full of modern Customs and Ideas : And whatever they cannot adjust to them, they, through a Narrowness of Soul, reject with Scorn, as highly improper. And thus it comes to pass, (agreeable to an Observation that has been made) that often, when the Objectors to Revelation think that the sacred Writers *nod*, it is only they themselves that *dream*. Difficulties, like Shadows, lengthen in Proportion as we are farther removed from the Light of Antiquity ; which, if it shone directly and immediately upon us, would vanish. Supposing a Revelation originally given to Persons of a different Age, Genius, and Language, it must be expected of Course, that there should be in it several Idioms and Peculiarities of Style, as remote, as the Time and Country, from ours ; several Allusions to Usages, then well known, but now forgotten. And what *must be*, upon the Supposal of a Revelation then given, can certainly be no Objection, or Proof, that it was not then given. It would have been as much Enthusiasm for the *Prophets*, to have declined the usual Methods of conveying their Meaning, whether by significant Actions, Parables, or any other Way suited

SERM.
III.

to the Genius of those early Ages ; as it would be *now* to revive them, when they are quite out of Date. Custom is always the Standard of Language : And that alone is *proper*, which is authorised by *it*, and the general Consent ; that alone *improper*, which deviates from it. No Doubt, several Forms of Expression may seem uncouth and absurd, merely because they are not familiarized to us ; as, on the other Hand, scarce any Thing seems *so*, which has been made familiar to us from our Infancy. No Doubt, there may be in the Scriptures some Images, in Appearance to us, too *bold* and *daring* ; they are Plants of a hotter Soil, which will not bear to be transplanted into a Climate so unkindly as ours. But such was the *Habit* of Writing, which then prevailed. Our Manner of Composition, however correct and accurate, would have seemed to them *flat* and *unanimated* ; like Marble, very smooth and polished, but very cold ; and which, instead of begetting a kindly Warmth in the Breast, would strike a chilly Damp into it. It is the Ill-breeding of the Vulgar among Criticks, to laugh at any Thing Out-landish in the Dress of foreign, but sacred Writers : Especially when there are plain Proofs, that the Body of Revelation, whatever the Cloathing of it may be, is *fearfully and wonderfully made* by the wise Author of
all.

all Things, and in *his Book are all the* SERM. III.
Members of it written. After all, were
 we no more interested in the Contents of
 the *Bible*, than we are in those of a *fa-*
vourite Classic, we should esteem it as, what
 it is, the noblest Composition that ever was
 penned. There would be acknowledged
 to be in it, as in the Works of Nature,
 something grand, august, and magnificent;
 and (however irregular some Things may
 seem) far preferable to the correcter Ele-
 gances of Art, and the confined Exactness
 of a regular Work. The only Considera-
 tion, that makes us fond of every little
 Cavil, and willing, at any Rate, to depre-
 ciate it, is, what ought in Reason to recom-
 mend it most of all, that it's *Contents* are
 Obligatory upon us. Setting this Consid-
 eration aside, we should make necessary
 Allowances for the Loss of proper Keys, at
 this Distance, to unlock Difficulties; and
 condemn that Man, as an ill-natured
 Critic, who, when there is a *Cup in the*
Hands of the Authors, and *they pour out of the*
same those cordial Drops, which *strengthen*
every good Man's Heart, is eager to find
 and suck out any *Dregs*, or Sediments
 mixed with them; any exceptionable Part,
 any Inaccuracy, or Impropriety. It would be
 owned, that every Person, that read them,
 was the better for them. They would be
 universally applauded *as ancient Authors*, if
 F 2 they

SERM.
III.

they were *but Authors*: The Consideration that they are likewise Prophets, Apostles, and Law-givers to us, flattens our Relish for them. There are a thousand shining Passages, which, if they had originally grown in the Gardens of *Plato*, or *Cicero*, would have been thought the most generous Plants, that any Soil is capable of producing. Unhappily for them, our *heavenly Father* *bath* planted them, and commanded us to eat of them, and live for ever. How admirable, in those aforementioned Writers, would have seemed the indirect Manner of suggesting Knowledge under the Veil of *Parables* and *Allegories*; that *useful*, but otherwise *offensive*, Truth might enter, as it were, by a By-path into the Understanding, when all the direct Avenues were shut up against it as an Enemy! How would those strong Paintings have been extolled, the least Praise of which is their Beauty! Their chief Commendation is, that their Beauty is made subservient to nobler Purposes; and that while they entertain the Fancy with agreeable Imagery, they convey to us the most beneficial Sentiments, and impress them more deeply upon the Mind: Like Blossoms, which, though they seem to be made only to please the Eye, are necessary for the Production of Fruit, and the Preservation of the Seed; Nature concealing, as it were, it's grand End,
and

and appearing intent to beautify the Creation, at the same Time it is benefiting it.

S E R M.
III.

It would be easy to multiply Instances to make it appear, that those Objections, which are looked upon as the Result of a superior Sagacity and Discernment, are, in Reality, the Effect of a profound Ignorance of *sacred*, and sometimes of *profane*, *Antiquity*. One scarce indeed knows, what some People deem Objections. Trifles, light as Air, often *tried in the Balance*, and *found wanting*, sink as deeply in unfurnished Minds, and make as much Impression there, as Difficulties of a weightier Nature; like Feathers descending in a Void with a Force and Velocity equal to that of much more substantial and massy Bodies. From this Set of Men you continually hear the stale Objection of *David's* being a *Man after God's own Heart*: And so he might be, comparatively with *Saul*, as to his *public Character*, in answering all the Purposes (the meaning of the Phrase, *after God's own Heart*) which the Deity had in vesting him with Kingly Power, by beating down Idolatry, and promoting true Religion, which was the sole End of the *Jewish* Polity. Or he might be *so*, even as to his *private Character*, though not in Respect of the Crime he committed; yet in Respect of the Severity of his Repentance, which bore Proportion to the Enormity of his

S E R M.
III.

Crime, and reinstated him in God's Favour; not to mention his prevailing good Qualities, and the main Tenour of his Life. I would not dissemble, however, that Revelation, as all other Things, has it's dark, as well as bright Side; is a Mixture of Light and Darknes; and that, as God has been pleased to give bright and illustrious Indications of it's Divinity to those that seek after Truth with all their Soul and with all their Strength, he has turned the Pillar of the Cloud to the disingenuous and perverse. Notwithstanding, though the *Matter* of our Faith be dark or mysterious, yet the *formal Reason* of it is *not so*. Whereas Facts imperfectly related in a summary View, without descending to Particulars, and therefore liable to Objections; mysterious Doctrines; the unfathomable Dispositions of Providence; Obscurities occasioned by Forms of speaking widely different from ours; Accounts of the invisible World, and of the Offices of evil Angels; these, and many other Things of which we know little or nothing, and therefore cannot affirm or deny any Thing with Certainty, are the *formal Reasons* of *Infidelity*. To these Men of this Stamp retreat, as to Haunts impervious to the Beams of the Sun, when we would set before them the Brightness of that Light, which arose with *Healing in it's Wings*.

The Difference between a *Christian* and a *Deist* does not consist in this, that the one assents to nothing but what is *evident*; the latter assents to Things *inevident* in *themselves*. But here the Distinction lies; the *Deist* assents to Things *inevident* in *themselves*, without any *Ground* or *Reason* at all; the *Christian* assents to Things *inevident* in *themselves* upon the *Authority* of *God*. Thus the *Deist* believes there is only *One* Solitary Person in the Divine Nature; the *Christian*, that there are *Three*: both Propositions *inevident* in *themselves*: And he, who affirms the *former*, no more perceives any necessary Agreement of Ideas, than he who maintains the latter. Nor is there any plausible Plea, that can be offered for a *Singleness* of *Person*, but that exploded one of a foreign Philosopher, *viz. whatever is, there is a sufficient Reason appearing to us, why it is, rather than why it is not*. And an ingenious Stirrer up of Doubts might raise as many Cavils against the solitary *Unity* of *Person* in an *Essence* every-where present, as an *Antitrinitarian* can do against a *Trinity* of *Substences*. The Truth is, both these Doctrines are *equally incomprehensible*: And he who rejects a *Trinity*, resigns his Understanding to a Proposition, of which he has neither *intrinsic* nor *extrinsic* Proofs; he who admits it, believes it upon the only Proofs,

SERM.
III.

SERM.
III.

that the Nature of the Thing admits of, or our Nature requires, *Extrinsic ones*. The Evidence for Christianity preponderates the Objections, for this plain Reason: because most, if not all, the principal Objections turn upon Points, of which we are *incompetent* Judges. But we are able to have a *perfect* Knowledge, and form an *adequate* Judgment, of the *Evidence* on which Christianity stands. Though therefore we ought to abide by our Judgment where it is sufficiently informed; we ought to lay no great Weight upon it, where it is insufficient and unequal to the Things to be judged of. We *have* no Right to judge where we have not a competent Ability to judge. For the Right of Judgment cannot extend beyond our Ability of judging.

Supposing it had pleased the Deity, before Glasses were invented, or Experiments made, to have given us a System of *Natural Philosophy*, together with that of Religion, containing all the modern Discoveries; what an ample Field of Ridicule would have been opened to *little Wits*? That *Three Divine Persons*, however distinct, should be so united, as no other Persons are, or can be; and therefore should be, not so many Beings as Persons, but one Being only, would have afforded but little Matter of Raillery: But that Millions of Animalcules, which have Parts correspondent to Creatures of much

much larger Dimensions, should subsist S E R M.
III.
together in one little Drop of Water, would have appeared as ridiculous an Absurdity, as that of ten thousand Spirits being at once upon a minute, and barely visible Point of Matter. That *Balaam's* Ass should speak, would have supplied them, comparatively, with no great Fund of Pleasantry; since a Cause is assigned more than equal to the Effect, and there was an *End* worthy of that Cause; viz. to let the Prophet know, in Conformity to the Custom of that Age (which was, not only to notify one's Meaning in meer Words, but to exemplify it by some striking Instance or Matter of Fact) that his Intention to speak otherwise than God directed, would be of no Avail. For He, who could actuate the Tongue of the dumb Animal, and make it utter what articulate Sounds he pleased, could also overrule the Madness of the Prophet, and deprive him of any Power of going beyond the *Word of the Lord*, or saying more or less than he should order him. But that the Body of Light should travel one hundred and four-score thousands of Miles in the Second of a Minute, as modern Philosophers assert, would have appeared to them an absolute Contradiction; as it supposed, they would say, the same Body to be in several Places of a prodigious Distance almost at the same Instant. How would they have been *astonished to hear,*
what

SERM.

III.

what yet has been demonstrated *, that ten thousand two hundred and fifty six Mountains (every one of which is equal to the highest Mountain in the Earth) do not contain so many Grains of Sand, as one Grain of such Sand does Particles of the Blood or Juices of certain Animalcules: or, that the smallest Portion of Matter that can be assigned might diffuse itself over the amplest Extent of Space, and fill it so, that there should be no Vacancy left but what was less than any given Quantity? The Stoicks and Epicureans would not have diverted themselves with the Apostle, for bringing *strange Things to their Ears*, when he told them of the Resurrection. All their Merriment would have been exhausted upon much stranger, if he had laid open to them the Secrets of Nature,—the seemingly Magical Operation of the Loadstone;—that all the essential Parts of an Animal, however large, are at first folded up in a little Speck scarce discernible, and that it's Growth is nothing but the Unfolding and Expansion of those Parts which were contracted before;—The art of restoring a Body to it's former State, when it has been altered by Calcination or Dissolution;—that the Sun acts through a vast intermediate Void, where it is not;—that the Rays of it's Light are reflected from a Surface which they never touched, &c. One would go upon

* See Keillii Introductio ad Physicam, Pag. 52. 56.

very

very sure Grounds, before one pronounces ^{S E R M.}
peremptorily, such Things are absurd, ^{III.}
contradictory, and cannot possibly be in a
Divine Revelation: Experience teaching us,
that several Things in the World actually *do*
exist in such a Manner, as we, antecedently
to Experience, should have judged impos-
sible in the Nature of the Thing. What
is there, for Instance, incredible in our Sa-
viour's Miraculous Birth? Supposing us igno-
rant of the natural Method of Generation,
we should think it as surprizing and incre-
dible to the full, that a Child should be
produced jointly by a Male and a Female, as
that it should be produced by a Female only:
Nor can this be more inconceivable than
the Formation of the First Man without any
Parents at all.

Thus far I have gone, intending, at
another Opportunity, to prosecute this
Subject much farther; as being sensible, the
great Secret of spreading Infidelity consists in
unsettling Men's Minds, by raising Doubts
and Cavils about the Style and inward Con-
tents of Revelation. These are the Intricacies
with which they beset us; the Thorns and
Briars, of which unless the Ground be effec-
tually cleared, whatever good *Seed* or Princi-
ples may be sown in it, they will *spring up*
with them, choak, or render them unfruitful.

S E R M O N IV.

The usual Objections against Revelation, founded in Ignorance.

In two Sermons preached before the University of Oxford.

I COR. i. 25.

*The Foolishness of God is wiser than Men ;
and the Weakness of God is stronger
than Men.*

SERM.
IV.

HAVING in a former Discourse shewn,

1st, That it is owing to Ignorance, that several Things in Revelation seem liable to the Charge of Foolishness ; I now proceed,

2^{dly}, To prove, that God hath stamped the brightest Characters of Divinity on some Parts of Revelation, which are thought most exceptionable.

The Almighty seems to have observed the same Design in constructing the Body
of

of Revelation, as he has in the Body Natu-
ral; that is to bestow the more abundant
adventitious Comeliness on the Members of
it, which seem to have no Comeliness in
themselves.

S E R M.

IV.

Thus, for Example, the Accounts of
frequent Appearances of God or his Angels
to Men in the earliest Ages (sometimes
upon Occasions seemingly not very extraor-
dinary) have been thought as incredible as
so many *Legendary Tales*; and we are asked,
if we could digest so much of the *Mar-
vellous* in any other Book? God, however,
would not lay the First of Mankind under
a Necessity either of having no Religion, or
of erring in the grand and fundamental
Articles of it: which must unavoidably
have been the Case, without frequent
Intercourses with Heaven, and Assistances
from thence; they, unpractised in the Arts
of Reasoning, and unfurnished with Materials
for it, being utterly unable to reason out a
System of true Religion, or even to prove
the Unity of God. Reason, in the Infancy
of the World, was not capable of *going
alone*, and therefore most probably was *led*
by the Hand; guided and supported by the
great Parent of all Things. How could
it be expected, that a Set of recent Mortals,
wholly employed in the necessary Accom-
modations of Life, having few Ideas, and
not Leisure to acquire more, should raise
their

SERM.
IV.

their Minds above sensible Impressions to the Discovery of *one Invisible Supreme Being*, and of the Worship due to him only; when of two such Men as *Julian* and *Celsus*, who enjoyed the Advantage of the Observations and Reasonings of all preceding Ages, one of them * could invoke the *Sun* as the *supreme Deity*; and the other † make the following Objection to the *Jewish Religion*: “Those stupid Shepherds” (says this great Master of Reason) “and Herdsmen, following *Moses* as their Leader, and being imposed upon by his unpolish’d Frauds, were induced to believe (wonderful Stupidity!) that there was *only one God?*” Thus what is thought an *Objection*, turns out an illustrious *Proof* for the Truth of Revelation. Here is a Matter of Fact, for which there is Historical Evidence, that there was, in the early Ages of the World, a Religion plain, simple, and true, as far as it went. Frequent Intercourses with the Deity, and Messages from Heaven, give an easy and satisfactory Solution of this Fact, of which no other possible Solution can be given. However extraordinary a Thing the Introduction of the Deity may be upon the Drama of Nature; here it is absolutely necessary to unravel

* *Julianus ad Regem Solem, Orat. IV.*

† *Celsus apud Originem, Pag. 17, 18. Ed. Cantab.*

the Difficulty. I might observe further, that no other Reason but this can be given, why the *Jews* alone should adhere to the Worship of one God, and be a standing Testimony against *Idolatry* amidst an idolatrous World. Repeated Interpositions of the Deity being to them, what Improvements in every Branch of Literature are to us; enabling us to demonstrate the Being, Attributes and Providence of God, and the Homage due to him: So that even *Natural Religion* could not have been introduced into the World, and preserved in it, without *supernatural* Instruction.

SERM.
IV.

Thus again, however astonishing a Matter of Fact the Deluge may appear to be; it must be admitted as such, because it is as well attested as any Thing in Antiquity: and whoever admits this Instance of God's Displeasure, which involved the Innocent as well as Guilty in one promiscuous Doom; cannot, with any Colour of Reason, object to the utter *Excision of the Idolatrous Nations (when they had filled up the Measure of their Iniquities)* by his Command who *could, and would*, in another World make a Difference between the unoffending Person and the Presumptuous Sinner.

Thus again some Parts of the *Jewish* Law prove themselves, and shine with an original unborrowed Evidence, as those relating

SERM.
IV.

relating to the *Sabbatical Year*; the *Ascent of all the Males to the Temple of Jerusalem three Times a Year*; against *multiplying Chariots, &c.* they being such, as no wise Lawgiver would enact, nor any Nation submit to, without an absolute Certainty of a Standing Divine Interposition: and whatever *intrinsic* Brightness these are attended with, they diffuse it over the whole Body of the Law.

Again, nothing hath furnished an ampler Handle for Exceptions, than those Ways which the *Prophets* made use of to notify the Will of God; as if they denoted a *frantic Turn* of Mind. Now the exact and punctual Correspondency between the Prophecy and the subsequent Events, plainly proves that *God spoke by the Mouth of his Prophets*; and it is demonstrable, that those, whose Writings are inspired by God, cannot, in those Writings, be guilty of an Absurdity. But there is no Demonstration that those Schemes of Discourse, which the Prophets used, carried any Indication of Frenzy. It being the only Indication of Frenzy, in Modes of Expression and Dress, *not* to fall in with received Customs, as far as they are innocent. It was customary among the Orientals (and among other Nations too, as appears from the old Way of ratifying Leagues and Covenants, from the
Act

Act of the *Phocæans*; to which *Horace* * alludes in his *Epodes*, and even from *Pilate's* washing his Hands) to communicate their Sentiments by Typical Signs and Symbolical Representations, in order to impress them with more Energy. They used to speak to the Eyes, by Actions expressive of their Meaning. Absurdity is either, what is so in *itself*, something that contradicts a confessed Principle or Conclusion of Reason, and this is unchangeably the same at all Times and Places: Or it is what is *relatively* so in Regard to Time, Place and Person. In the latter Sense it is of no fixed Nature, but an arbitrary Term; That being absurd in some Circumstances, which would be very proper, if Things were differently circumstanced. As for Absurdities of the former Kind, I know not any Thing in the Emblematical Actions of the *Prophets* that carries the least Appearance of Sin or Immorality, except that of *Hosea's* taking a Wife of Whoredoms: which, though but an Appearance, is obviated, if we consider the promiscuous Use of the *Imperative* and *Future* in the *Hebrew* Tongue. For the Words may be rendered, not, *Take thee a Wife, &c.* but, *Thou wilt take a Wife*; a Prediction, not a Command: and the Sense may be,

SERM.
IV.

* Hor. Lib. Epodôn, Od. XVI, ver. 25, 26.

Sed juremus in hæc; simul inis saxa renarint
Vadis levata, ne redire sit nefas.

S E R M.

IV.

“ I foresee, that in so corrupt and degenerate an Age thou wilt chuse a Woman who will prove unfaithful to her Conjugal Vow.” And as for Absurdities of the latter Kind, let it be considered; that however untoward an Aspect these Modes of Converse and Vehicles of Sense may now have; if they were accommodated to the Taste of the Eastern Nations, they were worthy of those who were singular in Nothing but Goodness, and wished they were not singular even in that; complying with their Countrymen in every Thing, their Sins only excepted, and resisting unto Death, rather than comply in those. Several Customs, which now universally prevail, would seem quite as absurd, were we in another Point of View. But as in a Vessel, where all things move alike, nothing seems to move at all: So where every one complies with something irreconcilable to the strict Rigour of Reason, it seems as if none did so. In a Word, the Arguments for the Inspiration of the Prophets are founded on good Sense, which is the *same Yesterday, To-day, and for ever*: But the Objections against them, are only Objections against the Age in which they wrote, and to which they adapted their Discourses; mere Prejudices of our Time and Country.

Those Truths do not affect us most, which obviously and immediately appear to be

be such. We are then most pleased when ^{S E R M.}
we are agreeably undeceived in finding ^{IV.}
something, which bore a Resemblance of
Error, turn out, upon a stricter Scrutiny, a
manifest Truth. And how many surprizing
Truths have been discovered, which once
looked like Impossibilities? Some formerly
conceived it absolutely impossible, that
Noah's Ark should contain all the Creatures
necessary to replenish the Earth. But now
the Capacity of it to this Purpose hath been
even demonstrated, and Infidelity is for
ever silenced on that Head. And when so
many Stumbling-blocks have been removed
by the Sagacity of former Times, this would
incline one to think that those Intricacies,
which remain, may, in Process of Time,
receive a satisfactory Solution. The more
wonderful and astonishing any Thing in the
Bible is; the more likely one would think
it is, that it should be true: because it
more evidently bears the Signature and Im-
press of Him who only *is wonderful*, and *only*
doeth wondrous and astonishing Things, and
doeth nothing but what is so. Why should
we expect, when every Atom in the *Creation*
is big with Wonders, confounding our rea-
soning Powers and inexplicable to Man,
that *Revelation* should be entirely free from
every Thing of that Nature? But whatever
strange Things some may suppose the *Chris-*
tian Religion to contain; it would be

S E R M.
IV.

much stranger than all of them put together, that, though Man was designed by God to be a *religious* as well as *social* Creature, no true Religion was any where professed from the beginning of the World to the present Times: which yet must be the Case, if Christianity be not true. For Christianity hath, at least, every Signature of Truth stamped upon it, with which any other Religion, supposed to be true, be it the *Patriarchal* or *Jewish*, comes recommended to us. So that if we discard Christianity, we must take away along with it every other Religion that can make any rational Pretensions to Divinity. As for natural Religion, it never was professed or established any where, pure and unmixed; nor is it calculated for Men in active Life, to whom the Restraints of Religion are most necessary. Such Men might say, "We cannot satisfy
" ourselves with abstract Notions of God's
" Mercy in general, which leave us unde-
" termined how far it may extend, as
" directed by infinite Wisdom: We want to
" have Mercy particularized, or reduced to
" our particular Case. If indeed a Person
" rose from the Dead and ascended into
" Heaven, we could easily, on his authentic
" Declaration, believe that he came down
" from Heaven to save Sinners. This
" would be Mercy, not in Idea only; it
" would be Mercy realized in Matter of
" Fact.

“ Fact. It would not be an airy, fleeting, S E R M.
I V.
“ unsubstantial Notion of which our grosser
“ Understandings could lay no Hold; it
“ would be Mercy substantiated and em-
“ bodied; descending from above, that it
“ might conduct us thither.”

It is allowed in Philosophy, that a Course of repeated Experiments is of more Weight to confirm any Theory, than all the abstracted Reasonings that can be invented, independently on them: Just so in Divinity: those Hopes that are grounded on a Course of miraculous Facts (a kind of Experiments performed by an Almighty Hand) are much better supported than any built on mere Speculation. The Mind is got too high on the Wing, and can find Nothing to rest upon in those airy Regions, in which it is soaring. Supposing, as some have supposed, the Præ-existence of our Souls; and that they speculated then, as we do now, from the Wisdom and Goodness of God; how natural would it be for them, before they were embodied, to draw a fine Picture of this World, to which the Original had no Likeness? How unlikely that they should expect to go through such a Scene of Ignorance, Misery and moral Imperfection as there really is in it; where Happiness, like the Sun, is generally within our View but never within our Reach? Now setting Revelation aside, why might not we as well

S E R M.
IV.

be deceived by mere Speculation with
 { Regard to a future World, and our Allot-
 ment of Happiness there; as we should
 certainly have been in Regard to this, had
 our Souls reasoned in a State præ-existent to
 it? We must, without the Help of Scrip-
 ture, form a future World of our own
 Imagination, to which, as it is in itself, it
 may bear no more Correspondence, than the
 World of a foreign Philosopher did to that
 of Nature. Nor must we expect that God's
 Creation or Revelation should exactly coin-
 cide with the Creatures of our own Fancy.

The best Arguments to prove God the
natural Governor of the Universe, are
 brought from the Universe itself: but the
 best Arguments to prove him the *moral*
 Governor of it (without which it will be
 of little Avail to prove him the natural
 Governor) are perhaps deducible from
 Scripture; the only original Book that
 considers the World as God's World; as
 under his extraordinary Providence. If we
 look backward to the Creation, we find a
 gradual Discovery of God's Will, and a
 whole Succession of Prophecies, some darker,
 some clearer, all pointing to, and centering
 in, the grand and ultimate Event of the
 Redemption, to which several intermediate
 ones refer. Add to this those of a distinct
 Nature, concerning the Downfall of certain
 flourishing Kingdoms, States, and Cities,
 all

all circumstantially foretold and exactly ^{S E R M.} accomplished. And if we look forward ^{IV.} from that *Æra*, we must observe a long continued Chain of Predictions beyond the Reach of human Knowledge; such as those relating to the Propagation and Continuation of Christianity to the End of the World; the Reign of Antichrist; the Dispersion and Restoration of the *Jews*; when *all Kingdoms shall become the Lord's Kingdom*, and all his *Enemies be put under his Feet*: Several of which being already fulfilled, give us abundant Reason to expect, that the rest will, in due Time, receive their Completion. And, whoever attentively weighs the *Internal* Evidences, will perceive they outweigh the Objections from the *Internal* Contexture of Revelation: to which if the *External* Proofs be added, the Scale turns with a vast Preponderancy in Favour of Christianity. It is a stupendous, complicated Scheme, and such as could never have entered into the Head of Uninspired Man; beginning from Eternity, carried on with great Uniformity, and ending only where all Things are lost, as to our Knowledge, in Eternity. Whatever Exceptions may be raised against this or that Prophecy; it appears upon the whole, that none could have formed, and thus far executed, so uniform a Plan reaching throughout all Ages, but that Being alone whose Views

S E R M.
IV.

extend throughout all Ages, *from Everlasting to Everlasting*. And could we take in the whole Compass of Providence from first to last, tracing each Link of the Chain; we might find there was not only a Consistency, there was even a Connection between all revealed Truths. Truth, like a large Diamond, would be most beautiful could it be had by us unbroken; each Part lending a Lustre to it's neighbouring Parts, and receiving it back from them; and all of them conspiring in a social Union to brighten and ennoble the whole. But such is the Poverty of our Understanding, that not being able to be at a sufficient Expence of Thought to purchase it whole and undivided; we are forced to content ourselves with some disjointed and independent Parts of it. But,

III^{dly}, Let us suppose there are some Things not strictly reconcileable to Reason, and some Inconsistencies in little incidental Matters and Points of no Consequence: Christianity, nevertheless, stands upon a firm Basis, as long as the principal Evidences for it remain unshaken, and the weightier Matters are worthy of God.

All seeming Contradictions as to Historical Accounts, minute Circumstances of Facts, and other incidental Passages, have been reconciled with a Clearness really surprising;

prizing ; and much more than could be reasonably expected as to Books written at such a Distance of Time ; when several Records, which threw Light into these Matters, are entirely lost. But supposing this had not, or could not, be done ; let it be considered, that it was not God's Design in giving a Revelation, to secure his Creatures from every Error however insignificant ; but to secure them, if not wanting to themselves, from Errors of a moral and religious Nature. God's Goodness, in publishing his Will, only obliged him to inspire the Writers so far, as to answer all the valuable Purposes of publishing his Will. Which is effectually done by giving us, what we have in the Scriptures, a full, unerring System of moral and religious Doctrines ; together with a sufficient Certainty of Fact to confirm them, and sufficient Motives to enforce them.

This being once granted, though the Scriptures should not be universally and infallibly exact in every Point, yet they are as exact as they need to be ; infallibly exact as to all the beneficial Intents of a Revelation. It is, I hope, no dangerous, tho' needless Concession, to suppose, that the Stewards of the Mysteries of God, like wise Managers of an ample Estate, were punctual and careful in their Oeconomy as to the main Concern ; but, amidst their
great

SERM.
IV.

S E R M.
IV.

great Abundance of spiritual Riches, did not attend to every Article of frivolous Expence; the Omission of which drew no Manner of bad Consequence after it. It is not incumbent upon us in our Disputes with *Deists* to prove, that *Moses*, the *Prophets* and *Evangelists* were inspired to such a Degree as to be to a Tittle infallible as *Historians*. It is enough to prove that they were so as *Prophets*, *Lawgivers*, and Persons making known the Will of God; and that, as *Historians*, he guided them so far, that they should not be guilty of any momentous Escapes or Inadvertencies; it being absurd to think, that when God gave a Religion built upon Facts, he would leave the Writers to themselves in relating those Facts upon which it is built; so as to fall into such Inconsistencies as would affect the Credit of the Relators, and destroy the Credibility of the Relation.

It was no more strictly necessary, that the Deity should guard against trivial Errors, than that he should reveal useless Truths: it is enough that he hath discovered Truth as far as it is important to our Happiness; and prevented Error, as far as it is of an hurtful Tendency. An extraordinary Assistance is seldom vouchsafed when such an Assistance is not material: and certainly it was no very material Point, that the *Prophets* and *Apostles* should
be

be secured from Mistakes that were not material; no more than it was so, that Providence should superintend all succeeding Transcribers, and preserve them from such *Errata*, as do not in the least defeat the original Intention of Revelation, or affect one essential Point. The grand Point is, whether we have satisfactory Evidence that Christianity is a Revelation from God containing every thing necessary to secure his Favour and our Happiness; not, whether it be a Revelation given us exactly in the same Way and Manner that we may imagine it should have been; and with that Degree of Clearness, Fulness and Freedom from every Stumbling-block as we might have expected: For it has been proved*, that God does not, in the Course of his Providence, dispense other Blessings to us in the same Way and Manner as we, previously to Experience, should have expected.

The Question therefore between the *Deists* and us being not, whether the Inspiration of the Scriptures be universal as to every Thing however inconsiderable; but, whether it be so sufficient as to take in all Points that have a Relation to Faith and Practice; so sufficient, that we may absolutely depend upon it in every interesting Concern: to set Christianity aside, it must

* See Bishop BUTLER's Analogy, Part II. Ch. 3.

S E R M.
IV.

not only be proved that the inspired Writers have erred in Points of no Consequence, and upon which nothing depends: (for this would only prove that God left them to themselves in those Cases, and did not interpose where there was no Occasion for him to interpose.) It must be demonstrated that they have erred in the weightier Points, which make Revelation a Matter worthy to be received of all Men; or in the main Substance of some Fact, upon which the Truth of Revelation depends. Unless they can do this, they will only, like the Serpent, *bite the Heel*, or give a Wound (far from being incurable) to Religion in it's lower or less noble Parts; without *bruising it's Head*, or hurting it in the capital, vital and constituent Parts.

But we will suppose their Charges of an higher Nature; Charges of Repugnances to Reason, Absurdities and Impossibilities in Matters of Moment. Now the Question is, whether these Absurdities which they object, relate to Things of whose Nature we are fully apprized. We are fully apprized of the Nature of Moral Evidence, it being that, upon which we *do* and *must* act in the daily Course of Life: and we cannot reject, what has so high a Degree of it as Christianity hath, without embracing Absurdities: Absurdities as to a Point with the Nature of which we are fully acquainted, and there-

therefore, we may be sure Absurdities really ^{S E R M.}
such. We cannot, for Instance, reject ^{I V.}
divine Faith without cancelling all human,
and breaking the Chain which connects
Man to Man: a monstrous Absurdity most
certainly, and big with fatal Consequences.
But if the Absurdities charged upon Chris-
tianity relate to Points of which we are
not thoroughly apprized; Nothing is more
common, than in such Points to imagine
Absurdities where there are none, and
therefore they may be imaginary, not real
Impossibilities. Thus an ignorant *American*
would think it absolutely impossible that
our Thoughts might, without any oral
Message, be conveyed from our Country
to his. The Reason is, he wants an Idea,
the Idea of Letters or Characters; which,
as soon as he hath acquired, the seeming
Impossibility vanisheth. And how many
Ideas may we want, as to Things above
our Ken, or Imperfectly revealed; which,
supposing we were Masters of them, would
clear up every seeming Repugnancy to
Reason? Thus again a Person unacquainted
with Painting would deem it impossible,
that an even Canvass should exhibit what
is uneven, the human Body with all its Pro-
minences and Depressions. A Stranger to
Mathematics would think it a gross Absur-
dity to assert, that two Lines should be ever
approaching one another, without a Possi-
bility

S E R M.

I V.

bility of meeting. That there are Quantities infinitely small, some of which are infinitely greater than others; that there is a series of them, each infinitely less than the preceding, and infinitely more considerable than the following, approaching nearer and nearer, in an endless Progression to Nothing, which yet they never arrive at: These are Truths which would be looked upon by Men unskilled in Algebraic Calculations, as the Reveries of a distempered Mind, but are thought, by the great Masters of Science, to be Proofs of the Extent of human Understanding, and the utmost Efforts of our Abilities.

What then? Would you have us to admit any Thing that contradicts any clear Principle or evident Conclusion of Reason? No, I would have you act agreeably to the clear Dictates of Reason; it being a clear Dictate of Reason, that partial and imperfect Views may, and often do, occasion an Appearance of Wrongness and Absurdity, which a full comprehensive Knowledge of the whole Case entirely removes. These Appearances of Absurdities are but Shadows, which are owing to a Privation of Light, or that the Light does not diffuse itself over the whole Body of Truth, which has to us it's dark as well as bright Side. We should remember that we know many Things but in *Part*; that the most extensive

five

five Understanding hath it's Boundaries; and that, when it is arrived at it's full Height, the Man cannot, however much Thought he may take, *add one Cubit to the Stature* or Size of it: that though we may shorten the Line of our Knowledge, as we may do that of our Lives, by our own Default, we cannot extend it beyond the Period assigned by God: Or if we could, it would be but Labour and Sorrow: The Deity sometimes being equally gracious in what he has hidden from our Eyes, as in what he hath revealed to them.

After all, such an Answer as this is sufficient as to most, if not all, of the Objections against the main Articles of our Belief. And such an Answer as this, plain Sense, without much Learning, might suggest. “ Such a moral Evidence, as there “ is for Christianity, is easy to be understood; and such moral Evidence is the “ only Guide of Life; that by which our “ Conduct is influenced, and our Behaviour “ determined in all practical Cases. Upon “ this therefore I will rest, as God intended I should do: Whereas your Objections against the Possibility of a general “ Resurrection, the Redemption, the Trinity and other fundamental Doctrines, “ depend upon metaphysical Intricacies, of “ which we, the Bulk of Mankind, are no “ Judges at all, whether there be not some “ Flaw

S E R M.
I. V.

S E R M.
IV.

“ Flaw in them ; and the very ablest Men
 “ are, it may be, but very incompetent
 “ Judges. Shall I then be determined to
 “ set Revelation aside, upon the Account
 “ of what I do not understand at all, and
 “ Men of great Reach of Thought under-
 “ stand but in Part, *viz.* fine-spun Subtil-
 “ ties of Disputation ? Or shall I adhere
 “ to it upon the Account of, what are easy
 “ to be understood, moral Proofs ? those
 “ very Proofs, which are a *Light unto my*
 “ *Paths*, and direct my steps in the com-
 “ mon Pursuits of Life ? Whatever Value
 “ you may set on your laboured Deduc-
 “ tions, and a long Chain of abstruse Rea-
 “ soning (as some do upon far-fetched and
 “ costly Rarities) yet such is the Goodness
 “ of God, that those Arguments are gene-
 “ rally the best, which are the easiest
 “ of Apprehension ; as that Food is so,
 “ which is the easiest of Digestion. Away
 “ then with your abstracted Arguments
 “ against Religion, by which you, the *Dis-*
 “ *puters of this World*, can throw a studied
 “ Obscurity over any great Truth, how-
 “ ever clear, and give a plausible Turn to
 “ any Falshood, however palpable. They
 “ seem to me to be mere Trials of Skill
 “ and Dexterity, and are not, I have heard,
 “ quite so good as those of an ancient
 “ Philosopher * against the *Possibility of*

* See Bayle's Dictionary in the Article ZENO.

Motion,

“ *Motion*, and those of a modern One * S E R M.
 “ against the *Reality of Matter*: Arguments IV.
 “ however that would baffle a very wise
 “ Man, though they would not convince
 “ even a very weak one. Dust they are,
 “ raised to obscure more important Truths,
 “ and to Dust they must return; or, after
 “ having been troublesome for a while,
 “ fall, unregarded, to the Ground. Moral
 “ Evidences, on the other Hand, are
 “ suited to my Capacity, and much better
 “ fitted to ensure a lasting Conviction to
 “ Creatures so formed as Men are, than
 “ any of those specious Kinds of arguing,
 “ which are set up in Opposition to them.
 “ They are a *Lantern to my Feet*, near at
 “ Hand, and portable to my Memory:
 “ whereas Metaphysical Proofs, be they
 “ never so good, are like the fixed Stars;
 “ which, though they may enlighten
 “ Beings, that move in an Orb much
 “ superior, afford little or no Light to
 “ Persons in my low Situation.”

We are guilty of no Immorality in sup-
 posing the Reason, why we cannot conquer
 an Objection, to be, not that the Objection
 is unanswerable in itself, but that we want
 sufficient Forces of Understanding to
 conquer it, or perhaps sufficient Skill to
 conduct and manage those Forces we have

* See *Berkeley's Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous.*

S E R M.

I V.

to the best Advantage: Nay, in so doing we shew our Modesty: And it were to be wished, that some great Pretenders to Knowledge were Masters of the most valuable Part of it, that Part which teaches them Humility; the Knowledge of their total Ignorance in many Things; and their partial Ignorance as to all the rest. But we are guilty of an Immorality of a very deep Dye in refusing to submit to Moral Certainty; it being confessedly criminal for any Man to do that in any Case, which, if all Men were to do in every other Case, would interfere with the general Happiness, and subvert the very Pillar on which Society rests.

Since the World began no one Instance can be given, that any Man was misled by trusting to such Proofs as Christianity is confirmed by. For whoever has been misled, it was not by yielding his Assent to Moral Evidence as such, but by yielding it when it was not perfect in it's Kind, when it wanted some of the Ingredients, which enter into that of Christianity. But Numbers have been deceived by trusting to speculative Reasonings of a finer Texture; and Men of superior and exalted Sense have fallen into Errors, from which common Sense has secured the rest of Mankind.

The Proofs for Revelation have shone the brighter to every rational Enquirer, the

more they have been of late canvassed, examined, and controverted. Controversy and Opposition having been to them, what the Wind is to the Plumage in *Indian Crowns*. The Plumes, however beautiful, never appear to the best Advantage, while they continue unmoved and undisturbed: The rude Disturbance and Agitation of the Wind sets them in Variety of Lights, opens and unfolds them, and calls forth into View the whole Strength of their Lustre, and every Beauty, which, during the Calm, escaped the Observation.

S E R M.
IV.

I shall conclude with observing, that what hath been so often said upon the Works of Nature, holds as true in Regard to the Scriptures, *viz.* A superficial and slender Acquaintance with them may tempt a Man to Infidelity; but an accurate, intimate Knowledge of them, and a thorough Insight into their Contents, brings the Mind back to a firm Belief, and makes us acknowledge and adore the great Author of them.

To whom be ascribed, as is most due,
Ec.

S E R M O N V.

The Damnatory Clauses in the
ATHANASIAN Creed justified.

MARK xvi. 16.

He that believeth not shall be damned.

S E R M.
V.

THIS has been thought an *hard Saying*, though it be our Blessed Saviour's, when he commissioned his Apostles to *preach the Gospel to every Creature*. It will be necessary therefore,

Ist, To consider with what *Limitations* the Proposition is to be understood; how far, and in what Points Unbelief is highly dangerous; and whether in some Cases we may not charitably suppose, that favourable Abatements will be made.

IIdly, To shew the Reasonableness of the Proposition properly *qualified* and explained, and the numerous ill Consequences of Unbelief. After which I shall,

IIIIdly, Offer a few occasional Reflexions, which arise from the Subject Matter of my Discourse.

I begin

I begin with my first Proposition.

S E R M.

V.

Though Ignorance, in many Cases, be absolutely unavoidable, there being several Truths quite out of the Reach of our Understanding; yet a Man, generally speaking, in plain and important Points may stand clear of Error. Because Error implies a wrong Judgment; and Men are not under a strict Necessity of judging, where they have not Evidence; or of judging any farther, than they have Evidence. Error therefore, *material* Error, is commonly owing to the Want of Care, and Attention proportionable to the Moment of the Subject; or to some predominant Passion, which discolours the genuine Appearances of Things. It is the common Case of Men, that when they are not determined by that Sufficiency of Evidence, which is fully laid before them, they are actuated by something else than an ingenuous Love of Truth. And our Saviour takes here into Consideration the *common* Case of Unbelievers, leaving it to the general Apprehension of Mankind to except (which they are apt enough to do) some few *extraordinary* Cases.

In the same Sense are to be understood the following Clauses in the *Creed*, commonly called the *Athanasian*; “ Faith, except every One do keep whole
“ and undefiled, without Doubt he shall
H 3 “ perish

S E R M.

V.

“perish everlastingly.” And again, “This is the Catholic Faith, which except a Man believe faithfully, He cannot be saved.” These are to be understood, like some other *general* Propositions, with proper *Reserves*, to soften and qualify the seeming Harshness of them. The Necessity of believing these Truths is only a *general* Necessity, like that of Baptism. And since the *Church of England* declares Baptism itself to be *only generally necessary to Salvation* (charitably leaving Room for particular Cases, such as may reasonably be excepted) She ought to be understood in the same Sense, when She pronounces the same Necessity, though on another Subject, Our Saviour says expressly, that *except a Man be born of Water, and the Spirit, He cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*. This is a general Proposition, like those in the *Creed*: Yet no one, except the *Papists*, ever interpreted it in so rigid and narrow a Sense, as that Infants, who died before Baptism could be had, should perish for the Want of it. If Disbelief proceeds from *Perverseness* of Will; Perverseness of Will is a great Crime; and all Crimes, without Repentance, are damnable: But if it does not proceed from Perverseness of Will, if it arises from *Incapacity*, or Want of the necessary Means of Instruction; such Want of Faith is involuntary, and what is involuntary

luntary cannot be sinful. But it was foreign to the Design of the *Creed* to take Notice of this Restriction in this particular Case, which is applicable to all Cases in general, whether of Belief or Practice.

S E R M.
V.

Supposing any Man should assert, *that all Persecutors, if impenitent, should be punished hereafter*; the Assertion, I suppose, would scarce be thought too harsh even by Men of great Moderation; yet even here, a Distinction is to be made between those who *offend of malicious Wickedness*, and those who do it in the *Simplicity of their Hearts*. Persecution may be either the Result of a wicked Heart; or it may be the Product of an over-heated and distempered Brain; and in this Case may become the Object of God's Mercy. However the Doctrine, that *Persecutors*, as well as other *Criminals*, are obnoxious to the divine Displeasure, may be laid down in general Terms, without clogging it with particular Exceptions. Cases of unconquerable Prejudices, and unavoidable Ignorance, like Cases of Necessity, are always implied; and therefore need not be particularly pointed out. It is thus the Scriptures have inculcated Obedience in *general* to those that are set over us; without specifying those extraordinary and critical Cases, which might warrant Resistance, and make a Change of Government necessary: because

SERM.
V.

such a Specification was needless. People aggrieved are rather apt to imagine such a Crisis, when there is none, than not to find out, when it really is.

Those who condemn the *Creed* for not excepting Cases where Unbelief could not be helped, might, with more Justice perhaps, have found Fault with such an Exception as a ridiculous, as well as a needless Singularity, without any Precedent to countenance it in any Body of Laws: where utter Inability is always understood of Course to be a sufficient Excuse; and, when it can be made to appear, always pardoned. Nay, they might perhaps have objected, that we can scarce make an Overture or Promise, however seemingly absolute, wherein some necessary Conditions, which would be trifling to mention expressly, are not of Course supposed; upon a Failure of which we are discharged from the Performance of it. Such is the Nature of Man, ever prone to cavil and find Fault! We think we have Reason to be uneasy, unless we have Things exactly our own Way; and when we have them our own Way, we are uneasy still, and that not without Reason. It is likewise to be observed, that the *condemning* Sentences do not extend to every minute Particular in the *Creed*; they only are pointed against those, who obstinately deny the Substance of the
Christian

Christian Faith, and particularly that *Fa-^{S E R M.}ther, Son, and Holy Ghost*, though *distinct*, ^{V.} are so *united*, so inseparable, that they may be said to be *One God*; just as God is in Heaven, on Earth, and every where else; yet Being in Heaven, Being on Earth, and Being every where else is *One Essence*, because *undivided*. Divine Being in Heaven is God, Divine Being on Earth is God, and Divine Being every where else is so too; and yet *not Three Gods but One God*. The common People have nothing to do with minute Appendages, and Technical Terms, which were designed as so many Fences against Metaphysical Subtilties, and artful Evasions. The *Creed* is only the common Doctrine of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation guarded*: and they who believe those fundamental Articles, virtually believe every Thing else, which was put in to save and secure those fundamental Articles.

Some Medium there ought to be between absolutely condemning those, who differ from us even in concerning Points; and, on the other Hand, representing the most concerning Points so very doubtful, and so much to be said for and against them, that we cannot be *morally* certain, that we are in the Right; and therefore we ought to be charitable to those who are of another Opinion. Thus some Men with a Design, or Pretence of promoting

S E R M.
V.

moting Charity, are introducing Scepticism ; the worst Kind of Uncharitableness. For it is uncharitable to the last Degree (though they may not design it) to unsettle the Minds of well-meaning People ; to beget in them Doubts and Scruples, and (what is the Consequence of those Scruples) Uneasiness, as to Points of the last Importance. On the contrary it may, I think, be proved, that Men may explain away any Moral Precept, however clearly expressed, by the same wretched Subterfuges, and unnatural Constructions, by which some have endeavoured to darken the Texts of Scripture relating to the *Redemption* and the *Trinity*. And perhaps it would be hard to give an Instance of any Christian of sound Sense, who erred fundamentally in these Points, but either He was misled into His Error by *Metaphysical Abstractions* ; by flying out into that mighty Void, where Knowledge ends, and Ignorance begins ; and reasoning, or rather *imagining*, on certain Points, where, to reason rightly, is to submit our Reason to God's Revealed Will : or He was an Admirer and implicit Follower of some Metaphysical Refiner. If Words are capable of any fixed and determined Meaning, those are so, as much as any other, in which these Doctrines are conveyed : But if Words are not capable of any fixed Sense, it is to no Purpose to
write

write or converse at all. What then? do we absolutely condemn those who differ from us in these Points? No. The Medium between these two Extremes is, that leaving a Latitude of Thinking in Points less useful, and laying the main Stress upon Essentials, we even, as to the last, abstract Men's Persons from their Opinions; and while we condemn the latter as pernicious, treat the former with Tenderness. Fundamentals *abstractedly from Persons*, as relating to the Scheme of Christianity, may be fixed by a certain and determined Standard, and they are plainly those, that are so intimately interwoven with Christianity, that It and They must stand or fall together. But Fundamentals in *a relative View*, as respecting the Salvation of particular Persons, cannot be precisely defined and adjusted by any fixed and unchanging Measure. They must vary, according to the Variety of Men's Apprehensions, Circumstances, and Opportunities. And it is impossible to settle those Points, the Belief of which shall be necessary to Salvation absolutely, and universally; to all Men without any Distinction; in all Cases, under such an endless Disparity of Capacities, Means of Instruction, and Situation in Life. Who can tell what determined Proportion of Faith (neither less nor more) will carry a Man to Heaven? That Quantity of Faith,

S E R M.
V.

S E R M. Faith, which may be insufficient in itself to
 V. make a Man a compleat Christian, may be
 sufficient for that Man, who, humanly
 speaking, has done the best He could in
 His Circumstances.

We cannot therefore, we do not, peremptorily and without any Exception, presume to pass a decisive Sentence on Men erring fundamentally. To their Maker they stand or fall, who alone views the hidden Springs and Causes of Men's Persuasions, and Actions, before whose righteous Tribunal we, as well as they, must appear. His unerring Wisdom can only form a true Judgment of Men's Hearts and Heads; whether the former may be deeply tinged with incurable Prepossessions, and the latter irremediably want a Clearness of Conception: and His Goodness may make favourable Allowances in such Cases. We cannot decide how far His Mercy may extend to Enthusiasts, or those that make near Approaches to Enthusiasm by a constitutional Impetuosity of Temper. Nay, some Men, who, in all other Points, have spoke the Words of Truth, Reason, and Soberness, have in one Particular, and only in one Particular, betrayed evident Marks of a disturbed Mind. Some very great Men have mistaken an arbitrary Association of Ideas for a just Connection of them: and hence, I suppose, it has come to pass, that some

Philosophers of Eminence have advanced as S E R M.
extravagant and absurd Opinions, as the V.
most vulgar Reception has countenanced.

It is no difficult Matter to find by what Means Great Men have been misled into an Error. Suppose, for Instance, a Man has, by a long Habit of Thinking, joined together the Ideas of *Necessity*, of *Existence*, and that of *one Person only* in the Godhead: so that, His Thoughts having run for a considerable Time in a wrong Channel, He cannot disjoin, or put them asunder: tho' others cannot perceive what *necessary*, that is, *immutable* and *unprecarious Existence* has to do with *Unity of Person*. The two Ideas do not imply or infer one another. They want some intermediate Term to bring them to a friendly Correspondence. Some have so inseparably associated the Idea of *Succession* with *Duration*, and of *Extension* with *Presence*, that they ascribe them to the *eternal Duration*, and *universal Presence* of God. And these Men, who, in Consequence of such Notions, do maintain an infinite Number, a Number that is neither equal nor unequal, a last Number; have sometimes levelled their Artillery against *Mysteries*; that is, after having *swallowed a Camel*, they have *strained at a Gnat*.

It may somewhat extenuate the Guilt of a *fundamental Error*, that those, who abet it,

S E R M.
V.

it, may not perhaps see, that it is subversive of Christianity. The Consequences, which flow from it, may be very shocking; but they may not discern those Consequences: Nay, it may be sometimes charitably presumed, that they would have rejected their Tenets with Abhorrence, if they had perceived that such Deductions necessarily resulted from them. Whatever Consequences we may charge upon the Doctrine, we ought not therefore to charge them upon the Men, especially if they be *remote* Consequences, and stand at a great Distance from the Principles which they espouse.

Again, we cannot determine how far the Judgment may be under the Tyranny of an Imagination, which has an uncommon Vivacity, especially if it comes near to Madness, and has been long indulged in it's despotic Sway. When the Imagination has great Beauty, and irresistible Charms, it will get and maintain an Ascendant over that which was designed to rule over it. Several stamp the Characters of Divinity on an *Idol* which the Fancy has set up, and wonder that all *Mankind* do not *fall down and worship it*. Every slight Argument, that countenances it, is Demonstration; and every one that opposes it is a palpable Fallacy: They see it in every Text of Scripture, and are surprized at the unaccountable Blindness of other People, that
they

they do not see it too. The great Dispute S E R M. V.
between Truth and Error, between Religion and Irreligion, seems to be only, what ought to be no Dispute at all, a perpetual Contention between Reason and Imagination, which should have the Preference. Reason can prove, that unless it's Comprehension were the full Measure of Truth, several Things may be true which it cannot comprehend: that therefore the Incomprehensibility of a Thing is no Objection to the Truth of it: and what is no Objection to the Truth of a Proposition, can be none to the Credibility or Belief of it: Reason can see well enough, that what may appear absurd upon our partial and imperfect Views, might have quite a different Aspect, if our Ideas were commensurate to the whole Extent of the Subject. But a proud rebellious Imagination refuses to admit what it cannot bring down to it's own Level, and of the Manner of which it can form no Idea.

There is sometimes an Inability to go out of that Track of Thinking, to which we have been accustomed from our Infancy. Our Blessed Saviour, who could with Ease dispossess Men of Evil Spirits, found it a much harder Task, notwithstanding His Miracles, to dispossess them of inveterate Prejudices, and rivetted Errors.

How

S E R M.

V.

How far any of these Cases will either wholly, or in Part, excuse a fundamental Error, how far an unnatural Association of *different* Ideas, which a customary Connection has made to some Men almost the *same*, might have been prevented; or if it early and unawares got Possession, might have been afterwards broken by proper Application, we know not: God only knows, whose infallible Judgment will pass our irrevocable Doom, after His Mercy has made proper Abatements. It is our Province to put the most favourable Construction on Things and Persons that we can; and not to curse those, whom we do not know that God hath cursed, nor to hurl the Thunderbolts of Divine Vengeance on the Heads, that have a different Turn of Thinking from our own.

But here I must observe, that a Narrowness of Thinking prevails very much among those, who would pass themselves upon the World for Men of the most enlarged Views. If some few weak Believers may have been so uncharitable, as to confine God's Favour to their own Pale, and sentence the rest of the World to Misery; too many Unbelievers are not at all behind-hand with them in this Respect. For they arrogate all common Sense and Reason to themselves, and talk and write as if they were the only Masters of Thought, and the

the rest of the World a Set of distempered SERM. V.
Bigots. Besides, no Men narrow their
Terms of Communion more, than *they*
do; nor, as far as one can observe, treat
with more Coolness and Reservedness
those, who are known to differ essentially
from them: not to mention, that they in-
veigh against an imaginary Persecution
(calling *Negative Discouragements* by that
invidious Appellation) with that merciless
Keeness of Spirit, from which real Perse-
cution proceeds. They who allow them-
selves to say such bitter and envenomed
Things, seem to want nothing, but the
Power, to *do* as hard Things as they *say*.
They put in Practice the only Persecution
in their Power against Christianity, a
Persecution very distasteful to ingenuous
Minds, the Persecution of petulant Tongues,
and Pens as petulant.

But of whatever *Manner of Spirit* they
may be, Christianity is certainly the most
charitable and benevolent Institution that
can be; one Mark, among many others,
that it descended from the most benevolent
Being in the Universe. The Merits of our
Saviour take in all from the Foundation of
the World to the Consummation of it.
Even those virtuous Heathens, who never
heard of the Name of Christ, may be made
Partakers of some Degree of Bliss for His
Sake: and, though not made happy *in the*
I Christian

SERM. V. Christian Religion, may become happy *by* it; by the Redemption of our Saviour, and by His Merits applied to them. For *as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall All be made alive*; all, but those, who have made themselves incapable of eternal Happiness by a final and unrelenting Impenitence.

And as to virtuous Christians, who have erred in Points essential, but erred with a well-meaning Heart, through some unmountable Prejudice, or unaffected wrong Turn of Thinking, they shall be saved *in* the Christian Covenant, as virtuous Heathens may be made happy *out* of it. For it is one express Part of the Christian Covenant, that a Man shall be accepted *according to what He hath*, or might have; and *not according to what He hath not*, or could not have. With this Limitation my Text is to be understood; He that disbelieveth the Christian Revelation, or the Essential Doctrines therein revealed, provided He could not have known better, shall not be obnoxious to the Divine Displeasure. For, provided He was sincerely willing, the Will, the hearty determinate Will, shall be accepted for the Deed. And with this Limitation the *Damnatory Clauses* in the *Creed* are to be expounded, and indeed have been expounded by every intelligent Person.

Whatever

Whatever other important Truths we may be obliged to hold ; there is one Scripture Truth, as important as any, which ought not to be forgotten, or violated, *viz.* that we ought to preserve and cultivate the most extensive Charity ; that Charity, which at the same Time that it *believeth all Things*, is not apt to *think Evil*, without substantial Grounds, of those that believe not : much less to imagine and censure as Unbelievers those who agree with us in the Main. A little, narrow, contracted Spirit may sometimes stand clear of shocking Errors, but it does not open wide enough to admit the most generous and enlarged Truths, in such a Manner, as thereby to encrease a Man's Love to God, and to his Fellow-Creatures : It may be free from any gross Immoralities, but it does not prompt a Man to excel in Virtue, and to abound in noble Actions.

The Sum is, that we do not limit to a few *comparatively*, that Mercy of God, which is *over all his Works* : we maintain, that as to fundamental Points, no Man shall be accountable for Error, provided it was *invincible* (which, it may be supposed, is generally not the Case;) and as to other Matters, which either are not very clearly revealed, or are not of such Concernment as to affect the substantial, and constituent Parts of Religion, there even a *vincible*

SERM. V. Ignorance may, upon a general Repentance, be accepted by God through the Merits of Jesus Christ, especially from those, of whom *much is not required* — that, be Men's Errors *vincible* or *invincible*, we must not contract any Rancour or Sullenness to any Part of our Kind, but defend the grand Truths of Christianity, which render it truly venerable, with that Temper and Spirit of Christianity, which makes it thoroughly amiable. So far our Charity may extend itself, and farther than this it cannot extend itself, without giving up every Thing in Christianity, which is distinctive of it, as a Matter of little or no Consequence; which amounts to the same Thing as giving up Christianity itself. But this leads me,

Idly, To shew the Reasonableness of the Proposition in my Text, properly *qualified* and explained, and the numerous ill Consequences of Unbelief.

If God sent His only begotten Son into the World to reveal certain Truths, and armed Him with Credentials sufficient to induce the Belief of them in every honest Enquirer; it cannot be a Matter of Indifference, in Regard to our Salvation, whether we believe or disbelieve them. God would not send His Son upon an unconcerning and unavailing Errand: which would be the Case, if Men, notwithstanding the Sufficiency

ciency of the Evidence, for Want of a ^{SERM. V.} proper Use of their Faculties, might finally and obstinately reject the Message, without endangering their eternal Welfare. Such a Conduct would be highly criminal and affrontive to God, and therefore punishable, in Proportion as it was affrontive and criminal.

Further; Christianity represents us as *fallen* Creatures, Creatures that have *no Health in us*. In this Situation the Scheme of eternal Salvation by Jesus Christ is offered to us as the only Remedy, the only Medicine for our Recovery. Consequently He who obstinately refuses to take the Remedy (which must be taken or accepted by Faith) is to be considered as still in a State of *Sickness unto Death*, or, in other Words, the *Wrath of God abideth on Him*.

Again; would it be any Uncharitableness to tell a Man, except He led a good Life He could not be saved? No certainly: It would be a Breach of Charity not to tell Him so. The Disbelief however of certain important Articles disqualifieth us for the Performance of certain Observances, which are essential Ingredients of a good Christian Life. Some of the Duties of Christian Piety cannot be performed, as to the *Substance* and *Matter*, nor any of them, as to the *Manner* and *Form*, which will

SERM. V. render them acceptable to God, without the Knowledge and Belief of the Myſteries of our Religion. We cannot, for Inſtance, pay Acts of direct Worſhip to our Saviour without Idolatry, unleſs we believe Him to be eſſentially God: And if our Prayers are only acceptable to the Father through the Merits of our Redeemer and Mediator; we cannot pray to the Father, in the Manner we ought, and in ſuch as will be accepted by Him, unleſs we truſt in his Son as our Divine Mediator and Redeemer. We do not then lay great Strefs on mere ſpeculative Points: We earneſtly contend for thoſe Matters of Faith (ſuch as the Divinity, Redemption, and Mediation of the ſecond Perſon) without which Chriſtian Piety muſt fall to the Ground. This ſingle Conſideration, not to mention ſeveral others, proves them to be of the very Eſſence of Chriſtianity. Chriſtianity is Natural Religion conſiderably enlarged by a new Set of Discoveries; Discoveries of new Relations; from which new Duties muſt of Courſe proceed, and which call for ſuitable Returns of Gratitude and Homage. Not to mention that theſe Articles, in their genuine Tendency, give us more lovely Ideas of our Creator, who gave His only begotten Son for us, and increaſe our Charity to our Fellow-Creatures, for the meaneſt of which Chriſt vouchſafed to die. In ſhort, the
Love

Love of our Saviour, which must be founded on a right Belief in Him, who is so great and good in Himself, and has done so great and good Things for us, is Morality: Morality in a much higher Sense, than the Love of our Fellow-Creatures, who have done nothing, in Comparison with what He has done and suffered, for us.

SERM.
V.

But does not insisting upon these Articles, far from promoting mutual Love, irritate Men's Spirits, and beget endless Animosities? The Query is, whether the Articles are *worth* contending for, not whether they may, or may not, *occasionally* produce Animosities. We should rather chuse, I suppose, to have some fixed Principles, by which we may abide, though Men will disagree with us uncharitably about them; than to have no fixed Principles, to fluctuate in endless Uncertainty, and then to disagree oftener, and more uncharitably about Things of much less Consequence. For in Proportion as a Warmth for spiritual Concerns was deadened, a Warmth for temporal Matters would be heightened. "I do not doubt," says a celebrated Writer in one of his Letters, "but that Commentators (did the same Interests go along with them) would carry the World to as violent Extremities, Animosities, and even Per-

SERM. V. “secutions about Variety of Opinions in
 “*Criticism*, as ever they did in *Religion*;
 “and that, in Defect of Scripture to
 “quarrel upon, we should have *French*,
 “*Italian*, and *Dutch Commentators* ready
 “to burn one another about *Homer*, *Virgil*,
 “*Terence* and *Horace*.” These uncharitable
 Feuds arise from Spleen, and the Tribe of
 black Passions, which, if Religion were
 out of the Way, would discharge themselves
 with greater Fury, as wanting that salutary
 Restraint, upon other Objects,

If we would have any Religion at all,
 Natural or Revealed, *that* Religion must
 imply and require the Belief of those
 Principles which are constituent of it. And
 therefore, though Allowance is made in
 Scripture for Variety of Opinions in Mat-
 ters of less Consequence, yet there ought to
 be an Uniformity in *Essentials*. If it be
 objected, that we cannot think alike even
 upon *Essentials*: I answer, that the Objec-
 tion proves too much, it strikes at *Natural*
 as well as *Revealed* Religion. For even
 there, several must have much more con-
 fused and indistinct Notices of God’s Attri-
 butes, His *general* and *particular* Providence,
 than others of much larger Reach of
 Thought, and superior Discernment, who
 yet may agree so far in the Main, as to
 influence their Practice thereby. Nay,
 learned Men may widely differ about the
Explication

Explication of an Article either of Natural SERM. V.
 or Revealed Religion, who yet hold the
 Article itself: just as several have very
 different Sentiments concerning the Manner
 of God's universal *Presence* and *Duration*,
 who are notwithstanding uniform in the
 Belief, that He *is* universally *Present* and
Eternal. May not any Man of common
 Sense understand, that our Saviour made
 all Things; and that He that made all
 Things must be all-knowing, and therefore
 God? For *He that made the Eye, shall He not*
see? and *He that made the Ear, shall He*
not hear? or *He that teacheth Man Know-*
ledge, shall not He know? Might He not
 soon be convinced, that, when our Saviour
 is stiled the *First* and the *Last*, the *Begin-*
ning and the *End*; by the *Beginning* is meant
 the *Efficient Cause*, from which all Things
 proceed; and by the *End*, the *Final Cause*,
 to which all Things are referred? He may
 think alike with others of brighter Abilities,
 as to the Substance of *this* or any *other*
 Fundamental Article, as far as it is necessary
 to regulate His Religious Conduct; though
 He may not be able to form as clear,
 correct and enlarged Conceptions, or
 think with the same Justness, Compass and
 Extent. Something, however, might be
 done even towards this, provided Men
 would exert the Faculties, which God has
 given them, with the same Application
 upon

SERM. V. upon these Subjects, as they bestow upon
Matters of less Moment. When Men have thought themselves obliged to set about a Thing in good Earnest, they have done that, which they despaired before of ever being able to do. There are Abilities sometimes in the Mind unknown to the Possessor of them for Want of something to call them forth. When the Soul strives to raise itself above the Ground, above low Concerns, it's Wings expand and unfold themselves, and in Proportion as they do unfold themselves, discover, what would otherwise have escaped the View, new Beauties, a greater Lustre, Gloss and Brightness, which were folded and shut up before.

Supposing Christianity, which has stood the Scrutiny of so many Centuries, should be totally rejected; Truth would receive the greatest Wound it ever felt: a total Uncertainty would follow as to every Doctrine, but those for which we had Mathematical or Metaphysical Certainty. What can we believe as certain, would People say, if God has suffered an Imposture to come recommended to us with such strong and commanding Evidences, as have deceived as wise, as inquisitive, and as disinterested Men, as ever lived? For such have lived and died in the Profession of Christianity. What can we depend upon as sufficiently proved, if that be set aside as false, which has so strong

strong Proofs, that no Instance can be given SERM. V.
of any Thing, that was ever suspected to
be false, which had so many bright Indica-
tions of Truth, as Christianity has? Chris-
tianity stands upon as good a Footing as
any Parts of our Knowledge, except such,
as are founded upon abstract Ideas, or
immediate Sensations. In short, upon the
total Rejection of Christianity that would
be brought to pass, which was brought to
pass at the Crucifixion of it's Founder, the
Sun of Truth would be *Eclipsed*, and there
*would be a lasting Darknefs over the Face
of the Earth*; a Darknefs, like that too,
not produced by the Laws of Nature, by
the Laws of *our* Nature, which requires
us to proceed, if we would act at all, on
Moral Certainty; and often, on Evidence
short of that. The Defenders of Chris-
tianity have, I think, fully proved, that
there is, all Things considered, a *Moral
Demonstration* of the Truth of it. And as
in Matters capable of *Mathematical Demon-
stration*, we ought to abide by a Proposition
so demonstrated, notwithstanding it may be
attended with inextricable Difficulties: so in
Matters capable only of *Moral Proofs*, we
are obliged to acquiesce in a *Moral Demon-
stration*; notwithstanding there may be
several Intricacies, which we cannot clear
up. Those, who have departed either from
Christianity, or the fundamental Doctrines
thereof,

SERM. V. thereof, upon the Account of numerous
Difficulties, have run themselves always into gross and palpable Absurdities; of which numerous Instances might be given. They have acted like that injudicious Fencer in *Tully*; who, while He was guarding against a Pass from which He might have received some slight Harm, laid Himself open to one, which affected His Vitals. Those, who will not believe any Thing, unless they can account for every Thing relating to it, should, one would think, in Pursuance of their Principles, fall into the wild Scheme of *Egomism*. The *Egomists* having resolved to admit nothing that was Mysterious or Incomprehensible; and finding that every Thing was *so*, more or less, came at last to this Conclusion; that no Man ought to believe any Thing but His own Existence. For, though how he came into Being, and was continued in it, was a Mystery and Intricacy which He could not clearly account for, yet these very mysterious Difficulties and Intricacies proved His Existence; it being a self-evident Proposition, that, unless he had existed, He could have raised, or had, no mysterious Difficulties or Perplexities in His Mind at all.

Since then the Evidence for Christianity is so strong; and the Importance of Its Doctrines so great: and since Disbelief would be attended with a Train of bad Consequences;

quences; it follows, that God might require SERM. V.
our Belief on Pain of His Displeasure. And
it is a Matter of Kindness in any One, to
warn us of the dangerous Nature of Un-
belief (some uncommon Cases known only
to God excepted;) as it would be Unchari-
tableness to lull us into a fatal Security;
instead of awakening our Attention to
Truths of so high Concernment. I proceed,

*III*dly, To offer one or two short occasional
Reflections, which arise from the Subject
Matter of my Discourse.

*1*st, Let us, besides the *Reasonableness* and
Necessity, reflect on the *Desirableness* of the
Christian Faith.—That the best Man, who
had an humble Sense of Himself, a deep
Sense of His Guilt, and an awful Sense of
God's Holiness and Purity, would not be
willing to trust to the hazardous Event of
Uncovenanted Mercy: He would wish, af-
fectionately wish, That Religion to be true,
which lays before Him a full Pardon for
His Sins upon Repentance, by an express
Covenant: And such is the Goodness of
God, that we may presume, nothing that is
false can deserve the affectionate Wishes of
the best of Men.

Infidels may be divided into two Classes;
the Men of *Pleasure*, and the Men of *Thought*.
As to the former, None are greater Self-
deniers than those, who deny themselves no
sensual

SERM. V. sensual Pleasures however criminal. By indulging a Pruriency of the coarser Desires, and thereby inducing a Callousness of Heart, they must beget in themselves a Disrelish for every manly, rational, and valuable Enjoyment; contract an habitual Littleness of Soul; and an Insensibility to each humane, tender, and refined Sentiment. Surely, a good Christian, in Belief and Practice, must have more substantial Gratifications; and consequently be, in strict Propriety of Speech, more a Man of Pleasure, of real Pleasure (which will stand the Test of cool Reflection) than the Person, whom the World miscals a *Man of Pleasure*. As to the Men of *Thought*; however they may appear in Company, yet when one traces them to those Places, where they throw off all Disguise, one finds that, generally speaking, their *Temper*s are as dark and embroiled, as their *System*, the gloomy System of unrelenting Necessity. The Truth is, though they will not see Evidence enough to make them good Christians, they cannot almost help seeing as much as will make them uneasy. Where there is such a strong Day-light of Evidence, however they may endeavour to shut up all the Avenues of Light, yet some unwelcome Beams will force themselves in to disturb their Repose. Hence that Virulence against Christianity. For when Men are uneasy, they must discharge their Spleen upon that, which makes them so.

2dly,

2^{dly}, Let us make a Distinction, where SERM. V. there is a *Difference*, between a modest Doubter, who offers his Objections with an ingenuous Candour, and an insolent Scoffer. I mention this rather, because Free-Thinking, if we may judge from a late Instance, appears to be little else, than a Permission to talk and write loosely and petulantly on every Subject; without being confined to the Severity of close Reasoning, or the Restraints of common Decency, upon any Point, however sacred. A late Piece of this Kind is made up of three of the basest Ingredients, that can enter into the Composition of any Man, or any Writing: *Disingenuity*, *ludicrous Impiety*, and *Dulness*. And the Author has Recourse to those Arts, which would expose any Cause (but Infidelity, that needs them) and any Person (but an Infidel, that makes use of them) to universal Contempt. But He knew what He was doing. To put Men by strict Reasoning, into a serious Frame, and sedate Composure of Mind, is not the Way to propagate Irreligion: Seriousness and Thoughtfulness being the Soil, in which Religion grows and thrives. To propagate Irreligion effectually, you must endeavour to dissipate all Seriousness and Thoughtfulness, by giving Things a ludicrous Turn. The Force of Religion is lost by betraying the Mind into Levity, by lewd Buffoonery and ill-bred Drollery.

SERM. V. Drollery. Such Persons are either to be sharply rebuked; or, what is sometimes better, entirely neglected: while the candid Objector is to be answered with that Spirit of Meekness, which becomes the *Followers of the Lamb*.

Lastly, Let us consider, (and may the Consideration sink deep into your Hearts!) that whereas it is a controverted Point, whether a virtuous *Heathen* or *Mahometan* may be saved in their respective Religions; it is a confessed Point, as has been often observed, and cannot be too often observed, that an Immoral Man cannot be saved in any Religion.

SERMON VI.

The Being, Nature, and Offices of
Evil Spirits considered.

I PET. v. 9. latter Part.

— *Your Adversary the Devil, as a
roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom
he may devour.*

IN discoursing on which Words I shall, SERM.
VI.
*Ist, Consider the Being, Nature and
Offices of Evil Spirits. And,*

Illy, Make some Inferences.

MAN has little Reason to think, that
He is the Master-piece of the whole Crea-
tion; or, that the Fulness of God's Power
and Wisdom is exhausted upon a weak,
frail, impotent Creature, that is probably
the lowest in the Scale of reasonable Beings.
It is much more consistent with God's
Attributes to suppose; that we, who are
next to the Beasts that perish, are far from
K making

S E R M.

VI.

making the nearest Approaches, without any intermediate Order of Beings, to an all-perfect Deity; that, as the Chain of Beings descends uninterrupted from Man to Brute, from Brutes to imperceptible Insects; so it ascends, by a beautiful and regular Gradation, from *Man* to *Angel*, *Archangel*, and all those thousand thousands that stand before God; and the ten thousand times ten thousand that minister unto Him. The Transition in this Poem of Nature, from one Kind to another, being so extremely fine and delicate, that we scarce know where the one ends, and the other begins. Yet the Dignity of the noblest of those Beings bears no more Proportion to His, who dwells in unapproachable Glory, than a gilded Cloud, on which the Evening Sun has impressed its Beams, and enriched with beautiful Stains of Light, does to that great Abyss of Light, from which it derives it's reflected Beauty. He can still make Beings, which shall as much surpass *Archangels* of the highest Class; as an *Archangel* of the highest Class surpasses the most despicable Insect. For every finite Creature, how great soever, must be infinite Descents beneath an *all-perfect* Being.

The World is one large universal Kingdom divided into several Provinces; where there are *Diversities* of Beings and *Administrations*, but the same God which worketh
all

all in all. God's manifold Wisdom may SERM.
have diversified the wide Expanse of the VI.
Creation with Variety of spiritual, superior
Beings, of whose transcendent Powers and
Faculties we, whose Knowledge is widely
disproportionate to the whole Extent of even
material Beings, have no more Notion, than
a Reptile has of the Faculties and Wisdom
of a Man.

The Query is, How Beings ennobled
with these Distinguished Abilities, could
fall from that Estate in which they
were placed, and plunge themselves into
an Abyss of Woe. To this it may be
answered; That it is probable, all Kinds of
rational Beings as well as we, have their
State of Probation; That an uninterrupted,
everlasting Enjoyment of unallayed Happi-
ness, Virtue, Truth, is too great a Prize to
be attained without any antecedent State
of Trial; without any Difficulties propor-
tionable to the Strength of their Nature, to
call forth their Worth, and put it to the
Test. And if they had Difficulties cor-
respondent and suitable to their superior
Strength; it is no difficult Matter to
suppose, they might be foiled and overcome
by them, before they were in a confirmed
and established State of Goodness.

The Scripture makes *Pride* the Cause
of their Fall: a Fault from which the
brightest Geniuses are not always the

SERM.
VI.

most exempt. They are too apt to be enamoured with the Beauty, and dazzled with the Lustre of their own Excellencies.

To find Men of distinguished Parts, and an uncommon Reach and Quickness of Thought, rejecting the received Notions, and disbelieving the great Truths of Christianity, staggers the Faith of some Men; who should reflect, that these Men as often *act* contrary to the Rules of common Sense, as they *think* differently from the rest of the World. A Fool with more of Wit than half Mankind; a Fool, I mean, as to the Conduct of his Affairs, and the Management of his Estate, is no uncommon Character. And why should it be any more a Matter of Wonder, that Men, notwithstanding the Superiority of their Parts, should think, talk, and write wildly, and out of the Way, in religious Matters, than that they should behave indiscreetly in the Oeconomy of their private Concerns, of which we every Day see Instances? People may cry up fine Sense, exalted and superior Sense; yet common Sense, if exerted with due Care, and attended with Humility, is the best Guard against any fatal Errors in Religion, or Miscarriages in common Life. The Devil was distinguished for his great Abilities, yet He fell through an overweening Opinion of himself. *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning!*
For

For thou hast said in thy Heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God, I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the Sides of the Pit. The Meaning of which Passage is plainly this; that Pride had been the Destruction of the Babylonian King, just as it had been of Lucifer, to whom he is here compared. And St. Paul warns us, lest being puffed up with Pride, we fall into the Condemnation of the Devil.

S E R M.
VI.

The Corruption of the best Things is always the worst: no wonder therefore that a fallen Angel should become a Fiend of pure unmixed Malice; (desperately bent on Mischiefe, which recoils upon himself, but augments God's Glory) endeavouring, like People that are sinking, to draw in others after him; and to tempt Mankind, as wicked Men do their Fellow-creatures.

If we consult the most Authentic Monuments of Antiquity, we find all Nations under the Sun in the earliest Ages, however differing in other Points, agreeing in the Belief of Evil as well as Good Spirits. The Persian Magi and the Chaldeans distinguished the Devil by the Name of *Arimanius*; the Egyptians under that of *Typhon*. The Greeks and Romans admitted both Wicked and Good Demons.

S E R M.
VI.

One of the most Ancient Greek *Philosophers* * asserts, that there was a Downfall of *Dæmons*, who revolted from God ; and that *Ophioneus*, or the Old Serpent, was at the Head of them. *Homer* makes mention of the *Dæmon* of *Discord*, which was in Heaven ; but precipitated from thence to the Earth ; where it employs itself in Works suitable to it's malicious Nature. Very remarkable are the Words of *Plutarch*, an Historian of very extensive Knowledge, as well as an able Philosopher (in his *Parallel*) on the Occasion of two Apparitions to *Dion* and *Brutus*.

If *Dion* and *Brutus*, Men of great Solidity and *Philosophers*, neither weak nor credulous, were so affected with these Visions, as seriously to relate them, and consult their Friends upon them ; we must return to the Opinion of the oldest Philosophers, and own ; that there are Bad Spirits, who envy Good Men ; and endeavour to *stumble* them ; lest, going on in the Paths of Virtue, they should enjoy, after Death, a happier Lot than themselves.

'Tis impossible to account how so many distant Nations, between whom there was no Correspondence, and who disagreed in other material Points, should universally with one Consent join in a Belief, into

* *Pherecydes*, as quoted by *Marcellus Ficinus*.

which no sure Principle of Reason could lead them, that there were Evil Spirits; unless it was derived by Tradition from our First Parent; who knew, by melancholy Proof, that there was a Tempter.

S E R M.
VI.

So far were they, in those early Ages, from disbelieving the Being of *Evil Spirits*; that they, several of them, ran into another Extreme, and admitted *two Independent Principles*; the one of *Good*, and the other of *Evil*. In Opposition to this early Notion, which was then too predominant, an ingenious Writer supposes that the Book of *Job* was composed; where we find, that the *Devil* could do nothing against *Job* any farther than the Deity permitted, for the Trial and Exercise of his Virtue. He could not exceed his Commission, nor enlarge his Sphere of Action, beyond the Bounds which God had prescribed.

This Notion lets in Light upon the following Passage of *Job*: *Hell is naked before God, and Destruction hath no Covering. He stretcheth out the North over the empty Place, and hangeth the Earth upon nothing. The Pillars of Heaven tremble, and are astonished at his Reproof. He divideth the Sea with his Power, and by his Understanding He smiteth through the Proud. By his Spirit the Heavens are garnished, and his Hand formed the crooked Serpent. Job xxvi. 6, &c.*

S E R M.

VI.

If we look no farther than the Surface; if we take the first Meaning that occurs; what a prodigious *Downfall* or *Anticlimax* is here at the Close of the Sentence, from *Garnishing Heaven* to the forming a *Crooked Serpent*? What Connexion is there? How little of a Piece is *it* with the rest of the Book, which contains an Assemblage of the noblest and most august Ideas? But if we look a little deeper, the Prospect clears up. In Opposition to the Idolatry of those Ages, which He takes occasion to mention; *If I beheld the Sun when it shined, or the Moon walking in Brightness, and my Heart has been secretly enticed*, viz. to worship them: In Opposition, I say, to this early Idolatry, He asserts God to be the Maker of the Host of Heaven, which they worshipped. *By His Spirit he garnished the Heavens*. And in Opposition to the Belief of two *Independent Supreme Spirits*, the one the Author of *Good*, the other of *Evil*; He asserts, that *His Hand formed the crooked Serpent*; or, as the *Septuagint* renders it, the *Apostate Dragon*; the *Old Serpent*, the *Devil*; the Author of *Evil*, whom they set up as a Rival to the Creator. How pertinent and beautiful does the Text appear in this Light! From hence we may observe, that the Scripture, even in those very Passages where the Surface appears barren and unpromising, contains the
richest

richest Mines of Truth; which escape the SERM.
Observation of common and hasty Readers. VL.

Agreeable to this Passage is that in *Isaiah*; where God is introduced speaking to *Cyrus* King of *Perſia* by the Mouth of the Prophet: *I am the Lord, and there is none eſe. I form the Light, and create Darkneſs: I make Peace, and create Evil; I make Peace* (a temporal Bleſſing) *and War* (a temporal Evil) *I the Lord do all theſe Things* *: Whereas you *Perſians* adore two Firſt Cauſes, the one the Origin of Light and Good, the other of Darkneſs; *I*, in order to rectify your Notions, aſſure you, that *I alone do all theſe*; that there is no Evil without my Permiſſion, no Good without my Concurrence.

Thus we ſee, that no Heathen Nation diſbelieved the Exiſtence of Evil Spirits; ſeveral carried their Notions of them too high, and aggrandized their Power too much.

We ſee, that, as the Scale of Beings *deſcend* from Man to Brute, from Brutes of a higher Species to thoſe of a lower, to the ſmalleſt Inſect; the higher Beings in each Link of the Chain have ſome Kind of Dominion and viſible Authority over their immediate Inferiors; Man, for Inſtance, over Animals, &c. And, from that Harmony

* *Iſai.* xlv. 6, 7.

which

S E R M.

VI.

which runs through all God's Works, we may conclude; that as the Scale *ascends* from Man to Angels; *they* too have some Power and Prerogative over *us*; as we have over Brutes; and these again of a higher, over those of a lower, Species. This is probable from *Analogy*: and perhaps it is nothing but our Pride that inclines us to think, that *we* who are suffered to exercise an unwarrantable Tyranny over, and to inflict useless Misery upon, Beings of a lower Class, should be intirely independent upon *Creatures* of a much higher Rank.

But the greatest Difficulty remains: How is it consistent with God's Goodness, or reconcileable to his Attributes, to suffer those Beings to *possess the Bodies* of Men, which was the Case of the *Dæmoniacs*, as well as to *seducer their Minds*?

To this the Reply is obvious: if God has suffered *visible* Beings to be the Executioners of his Vengeance upon us, why may not He suffer *invisible* Beings to be the Instruments of Evil to us? If God permits us to be harassed and devoured by wild Beasts, or aggrieved by Evil Men (more savage sometimes than Beasts) why not by Wicked *Dæmons* and *Accursed Spirits*? If Diseases, and often Death, are occasioned by *Natural* and *Material* Substances, why may they not by *Supernatural* ones? Nay, Invisible Beings are much fitter Instruments
of

of God's Providence with Regard to us, SERM. VI.
than we can be with Regard to one
another; as the Sphere of their Abilities
is more enlarged, the Range of their Know-
ledge more extensive, and their Methods
of Operation more expeditious.

There are several particular Cases, that
cannot probably be brought about consist-
ently with general Laws, or that uniform
Method of acting whereby God steers the
Universe. And if it be asked, why, in
punishing the Bad, and chastising or trying
the Good, God does not act *immediately*
Himself? It may be sufficient to answer,
that as God never calls in a *Supernatural*
Power, where an *human* was sufficient, so
He never exerts his *Omnipotence*, where an
Angelical Power was equal to the Effect to
be produced: or, in other Words, He
never uses more Power or greater Means
than are requisite.

In a Word, 'tis no Impeachment of
God's Goodness to suppose; He suffers the
nobler Parts of the Creation, *viz. Spiritual*
Beings, to exert those Powers, which He
has vested in them over inferior Creatures,
provided He has *set them their Bounds*
which they cannot pass; saying, *Hitherto*
shall ye go, and no farther; provided He can
bring Good out of Evil; blast their Designs,
and make That end in the Benefit and
Good of the *Whole*, which they designed
for the Destruction of *particular* Persons.

If

S E R M.
VI.

If the Frequency of Persons *possessed* at the Time of our Saviour's Appearance (more than ever were heard of before or since) startle any Man; He may consider, that the *Jews* being, at that Juncture, extremely addicted to *Magical Arts*, had called in the Devil in an uncommon Manner, as well as deserted their God JEHOVAH, with whom they were in Covenant. He may consider, that they were then just *filling up the Measure of their Iniquities*; and accordingly, not long after, *Josephus*, their own Historian, assures us they were arrived at that Pitch of enormous Wickedness; that, if the *Romans* had not destroyed *Jerusalem*, He believes that God, by some exemplary Vengeance from Heaven, would have crushed them; and consumed their City, as *He* had those of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. That God should abandon and give them over unto *Satan*, who had thus abandoned Him and all Goodness, is not much to be wondered at. He may, lastly, consider, that *then* chiefly were the Powers of Darkness brought to Light, because *then* chiefly That Power exerted itself, which was able to bring their Deeds to Light.

This may account for the Frequency of *Dæmoniacs* in our Saviour's Time. God *then* suffered Evil Spirits to exert themselves more than usual, because *then* a Way was opened

opened to fetch universal Good out of partial Evil ; by proving to the *Jews*, that He who cast out *Devils* did not work his Miracles by the *Power of Devils* ; and by demonstrating to the *Heathens*, that those Beings, whom they adored, were accursed Spirits, whom He dispossessed.

S E R M.
VI.

A very ingenious Author * expresseſſes his Surprize, that *Dæmoniacks* ſhould be ſo frequent in *JUDÆA* in our Saviour's Time ; whereas they never were heard of in other Nations, and *there* only at that particular Time. To which I answer, that here are two Miſtakes as to Matter of Fact. *Dæmoniacks* were in other Nations beſides *Judæa*, as appears from *Thraſyllus*, an Author ſuppoſed to flouriſh in the Reign of *Tiberius*, who uſes the very Word, which is rendered *Dæmoniacks*. But though they are not always diſtinguiſhed by the Title of *Dæmoniacks* in profane Authors, yet they are very often mentioned with Appellations ſynonymous to it †. And whereas it is objected, that they are not mentioned in the Hiſtory of the Bible before our Saviour's Time ; not to inſiſt on the Caſe of *Saul*, who was troubled with an Evil Spirit, the Omiſſion may be eaſily accounted for, without

* See The Works of JOSEPH MEDE, p. 28.

† Φοιβόληπτοι Πύθωες, Νυμφόληπτοι, Θεοφόρητοι.
Nocturnis Diis Faunisque agitati ; Lymphati, Cerriti, Larvati.

S E R M.

VI.

without supposing the Facts less frequent. For shall we suppose, that Persons, who had the *Dropsy*, and the *Palsy*, and *Lunatics*, were more frequent in our Saviour's Time, than any other? No certainly: Yet the Bible before our Saviour's Time seldom or never mentions *Lunatics*, *Dropsical* Persons, or *Paralytics* (though I apprehend those Distempers were very common) no more than it does *Dæmoniacs*. The Truth is; those Distempers were *not* mentioned in the *Old Testament*, because they were *not* then miraculously cured; and they *are* mentioned in the *New Testament*, only because they then *were* so. *Josephus*, however, supplies this Omission, and informs us, that, from the Time of *Solomon* down to his Own, there were many *Dæmoniacs* among the *Jews*.

But supposing them more frequent about our Saviour's Time: Our Saviour could detect *Evil Spirits*, and make them confess themselves to be the Instruments in inflicting those Diseases which were commonly ascribed to, and often undoubtedly are the Result of, natural Causes. However that be, the Power of *dispossessing* Evil Spirits continued in the Church for three hundred Years, till the Establishment of Christianity by the Secular Power. This Fact was so undeniable, that *Tertullian*, in his *Apology* to the *Roman Emperor*, puts the very Truth

Truth of Christianity upon this Issue, His S E R M.
 Words are these : " Let any One be pro- V I.
 " duced before your Tribunal who is pos-
 " sessed by the *Devil* ; being commanded
 " by a Christian to speak what He is, He
 " shall as certainly confess himself to be a
 " *Devil*, as elsewhere he does falsely avow
 " himself to be a *God*. Produce any other
 " of these who profess to be *Inspired* by
 " your *Gods* ; if those pretended *Gods* do
 " not confess themselves to be *Devils*, not
 " daring to lye to a Christian ; let the
 " Blood of that audacious Christian be
 " shed before you in that very Place.
 " What is more manifest than this Expe-
 " riment ? more faithful than this Proof ?
 " Here is plain Evidence laid before you ;
 " here can be no Suspicion. Even say,
 " that Magick, or some Fallacy, is imposed
 " upon you, if your Eyes and Ears will
 " permit you." Thus *Tertullian* ; and not
 only He : The main Current of the *primi-*
tive Writers for three Centuries speak in
 the same Strain, They every one attest the
 Fact ; they vouch themselves to be Eye-
 witnesses of *it* ; They appeal to the very
 Senses of their Adversaries. Here then is
 a Fact attested by Eye-witnesses, who could
 not be deceived themselves ; who, if the
 Fact had been false, would never have
 exposed their Cause to so ready and easy a
 Confutation ; themselves to Ridicule ; and
 their

S E R M.

VI.

their Persons to the Rage of their Adversaries : A Fact attested by Men of Learning and undissembled Piety ; which made their Testimony in Matters, that fell under the Cognizance of their Senses, uncontestable by Men, that gave the utmost Test of their Honesty by dying for what they maintained. He, that can deny a Fact confirmed by such decisive Evidence, proves the Fact that He denies ; proves that He is under the Influence of those Evil Spirits, whose Being and Operations he disowns. We cannot imagine a Set of Men would, for three hundred Years, at the Hazard of their Lives, persist in one uninterrupted Track of wilful unprofitable Lying, without one of them deviating into Truth.

If after the Propagation of Christianity there appear now no Traces of *Possession* among Christians, this is a Demonstration of the Truth of our Saviour's Prophecy : *Now shall the Prince of this World be cast out. I beheld Satan like Lightning fall from Heaven :* intimating, that Evil Spirits should flee before the Propagators of Christianity as swiftly as Lightning, that darts from Heaven to Earth in a Moment. *The strong Man well armed kept his Palace, 'till a stronger than he (our Saviour, who came to destroy the Works of the Devil) spoiled him of his Goods ; and stripped him of the Armour in which he trusted.* But to argue as some do, because
there

there are no *Possessions* now by Evil Spirits; therefore there were none formerly, is like that Monarch's Argument, who very judiciously concluded, "That Water could not freeze in *Europe*, because there was no such Thing as Frost in the Country where he reigned." And no Doubt he used several Arguments, which He thought Demonstrations, to prove it impossible, that the Particles of Water, which are loose, fluid, and in perpetual Motion, should ever unite into such Hardness and Solidity, that Men might walk upon that Element, as upon dry Ground.

This it is to make our own narrow and scanty Compass of Observation the Measure of all Truth! It can never be proved, that there are no *Invisible Evil Beings* — It can never be proved, that they have no Powers beyond human Abilities, or even beyond the Comprehension of human Faculties — It can never be proved, that they may not exert those Powers, upon emergent Occasions, as God, in his infinite Wisdom, thinks fit. Unless we could comprehend the whole Extent of Beings from him, who *dwelleth in unapproachable Glory*, down to the most groveling Reptile; we cannot understand what Reasons there may be, why the Divine Administration should be carried on by the Agency of Good and Bad Spirits. When once a Thing is

L

proved

S E R M.
VI.

S E R M.
VI.

proved to be Fact, it follows, that whatever is, or has been, is right with Regard to God, who permits or ordains it for the *Punishment of evil Doers*; or for the Trial, Exercise, and Manifestation of Virtue in others.

Though the Power of Satan is abridged by Him, who was to *bruise the Serpent's Head*; though he no more acts in so open and undisguised a Manner upon our Bodies; yet still he may influence our Minds, by acting upon the Scene of our Imagination; by suggesting wicked Ideas; and by offering Motives, that suit with our predominant Complexion, by alluring the Covetous with Hopes of Gain, the Ambitious with those of Honour, and the Voluptuous with the Prospect of Pleasure. And if any one now should assert, that those frightful Scenes of Vision obtruded upon our Fancies in our Dreams, in which the Soul is entirely passive (Scenes too regular for Chance, and never to be accounted for by the Laws of Matter and Motion) were produced by the Operation of Evil Spirits; it might open a Field of Raillery and Ridicule for a *Little Wit*, but the greatest Genius in the World could never confute the Assertion.

'Twas thus the Devil acted upon *Saul* by raising distempered, discontented Thoughts, and disturbing the Animal Oeconomy. And when *David's* Musick had dispelled the melancholy

melancholy Gloom, and sweetened the Temper; he, who had but a limited Power, finding all his further Efforts vain, fled away. And if even Creatures of our own Species can, by the masterly Strokes of their Pen, affect the Imagination, and by well-wrought Scenes melt the Soul into Pity, and rouse it into Rage; how much more may we suppose it in the Power of Spirits, who know each Avenue to the Soul, to work upon the Fancy; to brighten it into Joy, or overcast it with Melancholy; and to convey what Imagery they please.

The Devil can indeed *tempt* us, but we ought to thank God, that He can do no more than *tempt* us; that God, who *will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the Temptation make a Way to escape*, is more able and willing to *assist* us, than that Evil Spirit can be to *seduce* us. The Will is an impregnable Fortress, which He never *storms* by *Assault*, however He may think to *undermine* it by *Sap*. He can do just what wicked Men do, lay Temptations in our Way, but 'tis our own Fault if we comply with them. 'Tis ridiculous to deny, that he solicits us, alledging, that if He did, we should distinctly perceive his Workings. For 'tis his Interest to conceal himself. The Soul is susceptible of gentle, silent Impressions, as well as of violent Movements; and 'tis

SERM.
VI.

his *Finesse* and Dexterity to make us think we are following our own Inclinations, at the same Time that we are pushed forward by his Sollicitations. If we had distinct and evident Notices that he was operating upon us, we should start back with Horror.

What can be the Cause of those involuntary Representations, those hideous Appearances, that are forced upon us in Sleep? They must either proceed from Matter, from mere Mechanism of the Body, or from some Being that is not Matter. They cannot proceed from the former. For can mere Matter in Motion, an undesigning, unactive Cause, be productive of Action and Design? Can mere Matter make us imagine we see Objects, that are not before our Eyes, and hear Words that are not spoken? Nay Words conveying certain distinct Ideas, Reason and Sentiment. Can undirected Matter put Questions to us, and return Answers? This must proceed from some Being that is not Matter, and therefore either from our own Soul, or some other Intelligent Being. Not from the Soul; for *here* it is entirely *passive*; it does not *act*, but is acted *upon*. It could not lay a Plot to terrify itself, and mistake what was its own Workmanship for a Reality. It would not, if it could prevent it, impose upon itself; and then suffer Misery from a delusive

five Scene. We groan under an imaginary S E R M. VI.
Burden; — we suppose ourselves falling
from Precipices; — we grapple with, or
fly from an Enemy pursuing us with a
drawn Sword. It looks then, as if some
superior Being were at Work, forming
Impressions, and drawing frightful Pictures
upon the Fancy, when all the Inlets, by
which external Objects have Admittance,
are closed up.

And if such Beings, who have so great
an Ascendant over the Imagination, were
let loose upon us without Controul; how
might they distract the Soul, overset it, and
drive it to absolute Frenzy and Despair; by
exhibiting to it the most ghastly Appear-
ances they could form? But, Thanks be
to God, whose over-ruling Hand curbs
these Spirits, and restrains their Operations!
So much Reason have we to pray to be
delivered *from the Crafts and Assaults of the
Devil*. I would not be thought to lay
any great Stress upon this Argument. All
that I contend for is, that it is a much
stronger Proof *for* the Existence and
Operation of Evil Spirits, than any that
has hitherto been advanced *against* these
Points.

But this leads me, in the Last Place, to
make some Inferences, and so conclude.

We are conversant in the corporeal World
from our Infancy. Sensible Objects make

S E R M.
V I.

such early, repeated, strong Impressions, that it is sometimes difficult to let in, upon a Mind already immersed in Matter, one Thought concerning immaterial Beings, through an immoderate Fear of *Superstition*, For Men talk and write, as if *that* was the only Evil to be dreaded at present. We run into *Sadducism*; and lest we should suppose any Invisible Being *immediately* concerned, we assign visible Causes, which are plainly unequal to the Effects produced. In order to remedy this, the Scripture has in Part drawn aside the Veil, and let us into the World of Spirits; undoubtedly the most excellent and powerful, and perhaps the most numerous, Part of the Creation. What is my Soul amidst such a Multitude of Spirits? No more than a Drop amidst the vast Collection and Assemblage of Waters. It discovers to us the *Being* and *Offices* of Evil Spirits to excite our Caution; and the *Reality* and *Employment* of good Angels, to animate our Courage, and to raise our Ambition; for we *shall be as the good Angels of God*. And if every green Leaf swarms with Inhabitants undiscoverable by the naked Eye; if by the Help of Glasses the Philosophers have discovered new Kingdoms, new Worlds of Beings within the old World; if the least Quantity of Water is peopled by Myriads of invisible, sensible Creatures; it is no Enthusiasm to think, that the *Spiritual* World,

World, however undiscover'd, may bear some Proportion to the *Sensible*; and that when we are alone, we are so far from being in a forlorn Wild of dead, unconscious Matter, or furrounded only with Space, a lifeless Void; that innumerable intellectual Beings may be hovering round us, Spectators of our Actions.

SERM.
VI.

And when this Body, the material Curtain, that is drawn between Us and the invisible World of Spirits, is rent afunder; the Wicked may find a sudden Torrent of Light breaking in upon them; a Light more powerful, sharp, and piercing, than even those Pains, which dissolved the vital Union, and divorced the Soul from the Body. He may find himself under the Arrest and Custody of Evil Angels, to be thrust down into Places of Horror and Despair; as, what we learn from the Parable of *Lazarus*, the Good are conveyed, by a Guard of Angels, to Places of Light and Bliss.

To enlarge our Conceptions let us suppose, that, in a spacious Theatre where a thousand Lights are burning, one is inclosed in a little Cell of Earth, just as our Spirit in the Body. While it is inclosed, it's Beams strike only on it's own narrow Prison, and it has no Communion with those without. But let this Cell be broken down, it has full Communion with all those thousands, and joins it's social Beams with theirs.

S E R M.
VI.

Thus it shall be when the Body is put off, and the Soul enlarged from it's Prison. It shall find itself among Millions of Spirits to which it was a Stranger whilst immersed in Flesh, itself a Kindred Spirit.

2dly, When any wicked Suggestion, into which we are led by no Discourse, without any foregoing Clue of thinking, without any preceding Train of Ideas, arises in our Minds, we know not how, or from what Quarter, by a sudden Impulse; let us reject it immediately with Abhorrence.

The Scripture never makes it an Excuse, or considers it as an alleviating Circumstance, that we were seduced by a powerful Tempter; on the contrary, it makes it an Aggravation of the Crime, that we did not dismiss with Abhorrence a Suggestion, which we might reasonably conclude, from the Nature and Tendency of the Thing, proceeded from an evil Spirit. Thus St. Peter rebukes *Ananias* severely: *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?*

The Suggestion may indeed arise from the grand Author of Evil, and so far we are not culpable. But if we cherish and entertain it, we make it our own. The Offspring might be originally his; but if we adopt it, it becomes our own legitimate Child. And when any good Thought springs up, let us look upon it as a Beam of Light darting in upon our Minds from
some

some good Angel, or even from the *Father of Lights*. Let us improve, cultivate, and ripen it, till it breaks forth into correspondent Actions. SERM.
VI.

Lastly, Let us lay it to Heart what a Misery it must be, to dwell for ever and ever with those accursed Beings, our Tempters here, our Tormentors hereafter; in whom there reigns one genuine Blackness of Malice, without the least Beam of Benevolence shed abroad in their Minds: as, on the other Hand, what a Happiness it must be, to have for ever our Conversation with those glorified and ennobled Spirits, the immediate Attendants on the Throne of God; bright as the Sun, and numerous as the Stars; in a Place where no Malice, no Rancour, no Pain will find Admittance; but Love unallayed, and the Fullness of Bliss uninterrupted, will reign for ever and ever.

S E R M O N VII.

Curiosity in unnecessary Matters
censured and condemned.

JOHN XXI. 22.

— *If I will, that He tarry till I come,
what is that to Thee? Follow Thou me.*

S E R M.
VII.

THESE Words contain our Saviour's significant Rebuke to St. *Peter's* curious Inquiry, what would become of that Disciple whom Jesus loved? "If I will that He
" live till my coming to the Destruction of
" Jerusalem, that does not at all concern
" you. Your great Concern is to follow
" Me; to obey my Precepts, and believe
" my Doctrines; all other Knowledge,
" but what relates to your Happiness, is
" impertinent and vain. That is enough,
" without launching out into foreign In-
" quiries, to engross your Time, and demand
" your whole Attention."

Indeed it was our Saviour's general Method when any curious and-unconcerning Question was proposed, instead of answer-
ing

ing it directly, to strike off into some Point of general Use and Importance that had a Connection with it. Thus when He was asked, "Are there few that be saved?" Instead of gratifying an idle Curiosity, He commands them to lay out their Endeavour, that they may be of that Number whatever it be: *Strive to enter in at the strait Gate, &c.* When the Question was put to Him: "Who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" He, instead of answering them, set a Child before them, and told them, that except they had the Simplicity and Humility of Children, *they should in no wise enter into it.* Instances of this Procedure are endless; therefore I shall mention only one more: "Lord, did this Man" (whose Soul we suppose præ-existed before it entered the Body) "sin, or His Parents, that He was born blind?" Here a Philosopher, full of Himself, and of His unedifying Notions, would have been glad of an Opportunity to have expatiated upon a Speculative Point, and to have given a decisive Verdict in Favour of, or against a Præ-existence of Souls: Our Saviour, who always looked upon such Speculations as foreign to the main Point in View, leaves the Question as He found it, undetermined; but gives them to understand, that whatever Evils God suffered to take Place upon particular Persons, they were

S E R M.
VII.

S E R M.
VII.

were always productive of some great and general Good. *Neither did this Man sin, nor his Parents*; "This Blindness was not
" occasioned either by this Man's Vices,
" or his Parent's, but was permitted, that
" the Glory of God might be manifested
" in Him."

Give me Leave therefore to shew,

Ist, The Folly, Absurdity, and dangerous Consequences of an over-curious Pursuit of Knowledge, any farther than as it relates to Happiness.

Illy, To consider the Goodness of God in bounding our Knowledge, and shortning our Prospect,

Ist, Our Understanding has it's Boundaries; and when it is arrived at it's full Growth and Height, we cannot, how much Thought soever we may take, *add one Cubit* to the Size and *Stature* of it. We *may shorten* the Line of our Knowledge, as we *may* do that of our Lives, by our own Default; but we cannot *lengthen* the Line of it, any more than we can *that* of our Lives, beyond the Period assigned by God. The greatest and the least Objects equally baffle our Inquiries. Too great and disproportioned an Object embarrasses and oversets the Understanding; too little a one eludes and escapes

escapes our Notice. It is God alone, whose Almighty Power nothing, however great, can encumber; whose Infinite Wisdom, nothing, however little, can escape. Our main Knowledge is to know ourselves; what we are at present as to our inward State, Temper and Frame of Mind; whether we have those Habits which are the Ground-work of our future Hopes. By looking often into ourselves, and knowing thoroughly what we are at present; we may know what we are to be hereafter. And yet Those who have but little Time to spare, will spend it in any Thing sooner than in reading, or hearing read, those Books which may shew them the Way to their true Happiness; —why they came into this World, — and what may be their Condition in another. As to other Things, who is there that can answer all the Questions, I will not say, which God puts to *Job* in the XXXVIIIth Chapter, but, which may be asked Him by the very next Idiot that He meets? Some are so eager to know what is meant by the obscurer Parts of Scripture, that they never put in Practice the plainer Precepts of it: which if they did, it would signify little or nothing whether they understood the obscurer Parts or no.

Prefumptuous Man! wouldst Thou thoroughly understand the Manner in which Three Persons exist in the same unbounded Essence

S E R M.
VII.

Essence of the Deity? Before Thou strivest to fathom the Nature of the Greatest of all Beings, first, if Thou canst, comprehend how the least of all Beings, an Animal an hundred Times less than a Mite, does exist.

— Myriads of such Animals as can only be discerned by the Help of Glasses. If the whole Body be so minute as to be undiscoverable by the naked Eye, How much less must be the Limbs whereof that whole Body is compounded? How much less still must be the Veins, the Blood in those Veins, the Animal Spirits in that Blood, till we approach to the very Border of nothing? For yet This Animal contains in Miniature all those Parts which we have in larger Dimensions. In short, for one Thing that we can plausibly account for in the Book of Nature, there are Millions of Things of which we can give no Account at all. Yet we, who find almost all Things so puzzling and unaccountable in the Book of Nature, expect every Thing in the Book of Grace, which proceeds from the same Author, should be plain and level to our Capacities.

Most of the Objections against Scripture proceed from hence, that we set up for Free-Thinkers in Cases where we can be but Half-Thinkers at least, or even less than that; as wanting a great many Ideas, that are necessary to be taken into the Account

Account to make our Reasonings just, full and exact. Strange Free-Thinkers who will not believe what they cannot comprehend! As well might they think that the Horizon, which determines their Prospect, was the Boundary of the Universe; as that their Understanding was the Measure of all Truth. They must not believe they think at all, unless they first could comprehend (what is impossible) by what Springs the thinking Being is put in Motion; or how the Body acts upon the Soul, and the Soul upon the Body; upon which their Thinking at present, in a great Measure depends.

The Truth of the Matter is; We are Beings designed for Action, not for Speculation. This Life is the proper Sphere of Action; the next is that of Knowledge. *Here we see through a Glass darkly, but there, in a future State, Face to Face. Here we know in Part, but there we shall know even as we are known.* If you make it your Business here to lay in a Stock of Knowledge, without putting it in Practice; there remains after this Life no farther Opportunity to acquire virtuous Habits. But if you make it your main Purpose of Living to acquire and cultivate virtuous Habits, your Thirst of Knowledge will be fully gratified hereafter. Be virtuous here, you will be knowing hereafter: If you neglect

S E R M.
VII.

neglect Virtue here, that great Work must be undone for ever. Why then should any Man be over-industrious to purchase, with much Trouble and Expence, that Estate of Knowledge, which, as soon as one weak, dropping Life expires, will of Course, except it is His own Fault, fall to Him without any Trouble or Expence at all?

The Sum of what I would say is this, the only Opportunity we have of being Good is *now*; the main Opportunity of being Knowing is in a Life to come. Yet if we may judge from the Practice of the World, one would imagine they were in a different Way of thinking: for there were never more Scholars, and perhaps never fewer *good* Scholars. Hence so many Men seem to value some Branches of Knowledge just as others do some Kinds of Food; merely because they are *rare* and *uncommon*, not because they are *substantial*, *nourishing* and *useful*: Their *Difficulty* and *Obscurity*, not their *Serviceableness* to the World, stamp a Value upon them. Hence their Heads resemble those Cabinets that are stored with useless Rarities and curious Trifles; fit for Shew and Ostentation, not for any valuable Purposes of Life. Hence no Hours are sometimes more idly spent than those which are employed in Reading. I will

I will not except those which are employed S E R M.
V I I.
in Reading Books of Morality, if our *Studies* intirely terminate in a barren Knowledge of those Truths, without endeavouring to acquire those Habits and Dispositions which are inculcated by moral Treatises. When Men retire into their Closets to form Rules for the Conduct of Life, to examine into themselves, to reform their Manners, and subdue their Passions, they will come out much better Men than they went in: But if they go thither merely to furnish themselves with Materials for Conversation, to get a Set of Notions floating in the Head, without sinking deep into, and influencing, their Heart, they only heighten their Vanity; they swell and puff up the Mind, they do not fill it with *Food convenient for it.*

Hence we may account for the strange Conduct of some very thoughtful Men. It has staggered a great many to find Men of distinguished Abilities, who have laid out their Lives in the Research of Knowledge, either doubting of almost every Thing, or professing a determined Disbelief of those great and fundamental Truths, which the rest of the World have held sacred and unquestionable. And they are still more staggered to observe, that they have the Character of good, moral Men; that is, Men free from the glaring Vices of Sen-
M fuality,

S E R M.
V I I.

fuality, Incontinence and Dishonesty. Now let it be considered that Men, generally speaking, have seldom more than one strong predominant Vice; that the main Test of our Goodness consists, not in relinquishing Vices which we have no Relish for, but in sacrificing that predominant Vice to the Love of Virtue. Men that have sequestered themselves from the World to meditate in Solitude and Retirement have no strong Biass to Intemperance, Sensuality, or Dishonesty: Vices that are inconsistent with a Life devoted to Study. The *Sin that easily besets* them is a splenetic Pride, Discontent, a Spirit of Opposition, a Desire to be distinguished by new Discoveries, a Fondness for their own singular Notions, in which they imagine they have a Property exclusive of the rest of the World. And it is as difficult for them to get the better of this Desire of Distinction, as it is for others to conquer their Love of Riches, Pleasure, or Honour. What an inordinate Love of Pleasure, Money, or Power are to several in active Life, inducing them to take up with a Set of such Opinions as may countenance their vicious Practices; That Pride, Spleen, and a Desire of Distinction are to several speculative Men, prompting them to advance such Doctrines as few or none have maintained before them; and which, it were to be wished, few or none would maintain after

after them. And it is Matter of Fact, that the greatest Absurdities have in all Ages been advanced by Men of the greatest Parts, who had an overweening Conceit of themselves. It seems to be something providential, that those who trusted too much to the Strength of their Reason, should always be Proofs of the Weakness of it. In a Word, whatever uncommon Abilities they may have, yet, like *Sampson*, when God, from whom all our Sufficiency cometh, leaveth them to themselves, their Strength departs from them, and they become weak like other Men.

S E R M.
V I I.

To obviate any ill Impressions which ill Authors may make, it is sufficient for the Bulk of Mankind to reflect, that those Schemes must be false and ill-grounded, which leave Men in a worse State, upon the Foot of the Account, than they found them in with Regard to Happiness, though they may not have Capacity or Leisure to unravel their studied Sophistry: that the best-natured Being could not form a Wish more advantageous to Mankind, than that the Doctrines of Christianity, those strong Incentives to Virtue, should be universally believed, and it's Precepts universally practised. Now what is necessary to the Happiness of the World must be true. For though private, partial Good and Truth may often interfere; yet public, general Good

SERM.
VII.

and Truth always keep close together. There must be a true Harmony and strict Correspondence between them, as long as there is a Being of infinite Goodness at the Helm. For a Being, who wills the Happiness of Mankind, must will whatever is conducive to the general Good; and what He, the Author of Truth, *wills*, must be founded upon Truth. The proper Answer then to these pernicious Books is; "What Good to
" the World do you propose by them?
" Will they make us better Parents? more
" dutiful Children? more tender Husbands?
" more acceptable to God? more
" serviceable to our Fellow-creatures? For
" the same Reason that we are resolved to
" be of any Religion, we are resolved to
" be of the best: and we see none that
" can come in Competition with Christianity,
" which contains stronger Motives
" to true Holiness than any other Religion
" before had, and as strong as any other
" can have."

Men may extol as much as they please fine, exalted and superior Sense; but plain Common-Sense, exerted with Caution and Industry, and attended with Humility, is a much surer Guard against any fatal Errors in Religion, or Miscarriages in civil Life, than the most distinguished Brightness of Parts, and Vivacity of Imagination, when accompanied with an over-bearing Pride.

For that very Vivacity sometimes may ^{S E R M.}
make Men too impatient to go to the Bottom ^{VII.}
of Things; or they often start so much
Game, in the wide and spacious Field of
Thinking, that they overtake none. The
Edge of their Mind is *fine*, but soon *turned*
by any Thing that is hard and knotty.
Whereas a Man of fewer Ideas, but who
lays them in Order, and compares and
examines them, going Step by Step in the
Pursuit of Truth in a gradual Chain, makes
up by Industry, Care and Caution, what-
ever He wants in Quickness and Readiness
of Parts. Just as in Business the most
mercurial and volatile Spirits are seldom so
successful as Men of much meaner Capa-
cities; but who are withal more judicious,
wary, and attentive.

Yet those are the Men that are generally
meddling with *Things that are too high for*
them; that overlook the *plain* and *obvious*
Truths of Christianity, meerly because
they *are so*; and are continually grasping
at Things to which their Capacities are not
suited. He who, upon the bare Proposal
of such curious Questions, should, without
further Consideration, immediately declare,
that he knows *nothing* at all of the Matter;
has in a Moment made as great Advances
in the Knowledge of them, as He who
hath exhausted His Spirits, and impaired
His Health, in attempting to sound the

S E R M.
V I I.

Depth of them. It is observable, that, of all Subjects but one, a general Knowledge is commonly sufficient. Whoever descends into little minute Particularities, his Knowledge, as far as those Points are concerned, is unintelligible to the Bulk of Mankind, and useless almost to all. And He may be compared to Those, who observed a nice Punctuality in little insignificant Trifles, at the same Time that they neglected the *weightier Matters*, that were of Use and Importance to all. There is one Subject only, namely, Ourselves, that requires a minute, particular Survey, without suffering any Thing, how small soever, to escape our Notice. And this is a Subject that we generally decline. We are content *here* to be *Coasters* only; we cruise about the Shore, without ever piercing into the *Inland Parts* of the Country.

In other Subjects it is a Question, whether we err oftner by thinking *too little*, or by thinking *too much*. We may pursue our Speculations so far, till we lose Sight of Common Sense. Nay some, by too intense an Application to Things beyond their Sphere, have unhinged their Understanding. And when they had launched into the Deep, and were endeavouring to bring from the immense Ocean of Knowledge a large Draught of Intellectual Food; like the Fishermen's in the Gospel, the Net which contained

contained it was *broke*: I mean, the curious ^{S E R M.} Net-work of the Brain has been difturbed, ^{V II.} and all their Labour loft.

I proceed,

Idly, To confider the Goodnefs of God, in thus bounding our Knowledge, and fhortening our Proſpect.

For my Part, I think the Divine Goodnefs as much diſplayed in our *Ignorance* of many Things, as in our *Knowledge* of others. I thank the Deity for what He has Concealed from us, as well as what He has Revealed to us. Though we have not Extent of Line enough to found the Depths of Knowledge; yet we have enough to find out Rocks and Shelves, and thereby to avoid them. 'Tis with the Faculties of the Mind as with the Senſes of the Body; they are both exactly ſuited to the Exigences of Life, and the Buſineſs we have to do here. Were our Senſe of Hearing ſome Degrees more acute than it is, we ſhould be diſturbed by the leaſt Noiſe: We ſhould be no more able to ſleep, or meditate in Retirement, than in the miſt of a Storm; the leaſt Breath of Air, the leaſt Whiſper, might be incommodious. If our Senſe of Feeling were more delicate, the flighteſt Touch would give us exquisite Senſations of Pain; our Torments would increaſe too in Proportion to our Senſibility. And

S E R M.
VII.

indeed all the Senses, which are now so many Inlets of Pleasure, would by being quickened and heightened to any considerable Degree in our present Condition, become so many Avenues of Anguish. Were our Eye-sight greatly sharper, we should be quite in another World; Objects that now seem smooth and beautiful, would appear rugged, uneven and unsightly, as they do through Microscopes. A more improved State of the Faculties of the Mind would be attended with the same Inconveniences. It is with the Mind as with the Eye; too much Light would be as useless, as too much Darkness. Therefore the Deity has given both of them just such a Portion of Light as is suited to our present Situation in Life. If we were, for Instance, able to pry into the Depths of Futurity, and foresee what was to befall us, what would be the Consequence? That we should be extremely miserable; that we should *torment ourselves before the Time*, by the Dread of future Evils; and lessen every Joy by anticipating it. Heaven therefore has, in Mercy to us, locked up from us the Book of Fate, and only laid open to us that Part which concerns us at present. Again,

We might think it would be of great Advantage to us to be able to penetrate into the Thoughts, and discover before-hand the Designs Men are forming against us.

But

But if each Man could discern what passed within another's Mind, as well as He did what was in his own; were every Thing there laid open as much to one another as it is to *Him with whom we have to do*; we should discover often such forbidding Images, such unfavourable Sentiments, that we should, several of us, become insupportable to one another. Farther,

S E R M.
VII.

We might wish to have the Curtain drawn, and a fuller View of another World presented to us: But God conceals from the Good a distinct, explicit Account of the Advantages that will accrue to them after Death, that they might still endure Life, and all it's Inconveniencies. And so in a thousand other Instances.

There is a Point in Knowledge where *Use* ends, and mere *Curiosity* begins. As far as any Thing is useful and important; so far all is generally Light and Clearness. Beyond that all is Darknes, or at least one undistinguished Blank. The Reason is, God has drawn a Veil over this Part of Knowledge, lest we should be distracted with a Multiplicity of Ideas, and diverted from useful and practical Enquiries, by attending to Matters of mere Speculation. To exemplify this in the Point of the *Redemption*, the grand and fundamental Doctrine of Christianity; some People complain of a Darknes spread over the Face of this Dispensation.

SERM.
VII.

penfation. But as far as it is a Doctrine of Use and Importance, fo far it is clearly and diftinctly revealed. We are exprefsly told what our Saviour has purchafed for us, and what we have to do for ourfelves, to qualify us for thefe Bleffings. It is revealed to us, that God through his Merits will confer that *exceeding and eternal Weight of* Blifs upon every penitent Sinner, to which even the unoffending, who *need no Repentance*, could have no Title. So far it is a Doctrine of folid Use and Importance. But we want perhaps more fully to know the internal Nature, Manner, and particular Efficacy of his Merits and Interceffion, and the whole Tranfaction between the Father and the Son in the ftupendous Work of our Salvation: *here* mere Curiofity commences; and therefore no Wonder our Knowledge fhould in fome Meafure end.

Thefe are the Things which *Angels defire to look into*; and we, till we are Angels, fhould not expect a full and comprehensive Satisfaction about them. A Man may know a Matter of Fact, that He is ransomed from Captivity and Slavery by a glorious Sovereign, without knowing particularly, explicitey and fully the Kind, Manner, and Value of the Ransom that was laid down, and the Price with which He was bought. No: let Angels and Arch-Angels *defire to look into*, and contemplate the

the *Nature* of our Redemption : Let Man be humbly content to enjoy the Benefits of it : Enough for Him to know, that Scripture proves, and Reason cannot disprove, the Doctrine.

S E R M.
VII.

To conclude; let us all be convinced, that in the *deep Things of God*, to reason *rightly* is to submit our Reason to the Wisdom of God. We then, and not till then, are growing wise; when we begin to discern how weak and foolish we are. An absolute Perfection of Understanding is impossible: but He makes the nearest Approaches to it, who has the Sense to discern, and the Humility to own it's Imperfections,

SERMON VIII.

Delight in *GOD* the Origin and
Perfection of human Pleasure.

PSALM xxxvii. 4.

*Delight Thyself also in the LORD; and
He shall give Thee the Desires of thine
Heart.*

SERM.
VIII.

PLEASURE, or the Enjoyment of
our *Heart's Desire*, being the chief
Spring of Action in Man; the due Re-
gulation of our Pursuits of it must always
be of great Moment; and whoever ad-
dresseth us with an Offer of This Kind,
will justly demand, and can scarce fail of
engaging, our Attention. Now such a Pro-
posal the *Psalmist* here makes to us all;
directing our *Pursuits* after Pleasure to the
great *Source* of it, and informing us, that
the sure Method of attaining *the Desire of
our Hearts is to delight in the LORD*,
Which important Truth I shall accordingly
at present endeavour to make out by shew-
ing, how all our *Pleasures* point out to us,
and are improved by, a *Delight in GOD*.

And

And this I shall illustrate more particularly with Regard, First, to the Pleasures of *Sense* and of *Imagination*; And then, to those *Moral* and *Intellectual* Pleasures, of *Benevolence* towards others, and of *Hope* and *Expectation* for ourselves.

SERM.
VIII.

To begin with *Sensual* Pleasures. Even these, though the lowest in the Scale of Enjoyment, should however always put us in Mind, who it is that gives us all the Objects we enjoy, and the very Power of enjoying them: Otherwise we shall deserve those severe Rebukes, which GOD gives the *Israelites* by the Prophet *Isaiah*; *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib; but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.* And again, *The Harp and the Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine are in their Feasts: but they regard not the Work of the LORD, neither consider the Operation of His Hands.* It seems, they could enjoy the Accommodations and Gratifications of Life, without ever carrying their Thoughts upwards to that Being, who *openeth his Hand, and filleth all Things living with Plenteousness.*

And how justly may those among ourselves fall under the same Condemnation, who either profanely neglect, or thoughtlessly forget, to crave the Divine Blessing upon their Food, and to return Thanks to Him for it! A Duty enforced by the Example

SERM.
VIII.

ample and constant Practice of our Blessed Saviour; who (not to mention several other Instances) *took the seven Loaves, and the two Fishes, and gave Thanks*; a Duty exemplified by *St. Paul*, when, as we read, *He took Bread, and gave Thanks before them all*; as well as recommended by his express Declaration, where, speaking of *Meats, which* (as He tells us) *GOD hath created to be received with Thanksgiving*, He adds; *For every Creature of GOD is Good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with Thanksgiving*; for it is sanctified by the *Word of GOD* (which has abolished the Distinction of Meats) and Prayer. And in another Place, *He that eateth, eateth to the LORD*; for he giveth *GOD Thanks*. But because the Example of *Confucius* may weigh more with some Men than that of *St. Paul*, let me add, what is observed of him; that He never eat any Thing but he first prostrated himself, and offered it to the Supreme LORD of Heaven. In like Manner, *Whether we eat or drink, let us do all to the Glory of GOD*. This will enoble and improve our carnal Gratifications, and exalt them into religious Acts of Gratitude and Love.

And indeed, it is the Mixture of some *Moral* Pleasure that gives the most agreeable Relish to *Sensible* Pleasures: Some grateful Reflection on the *Person who bestows*

flows them ; or some benevolent Thoughts S E R M. VIII.
towards *those* with whom *we* share them. }
To *fare sumptuously every Day* would be a
very fordid Indulgence, and of slender
Estimation, when intirely unaccompanied
by a Temper thankful to the Author of every
good Gift, and hospitable to our Fellow-
creatures. It is this that must give a Re-
finement and Delicacy to our Pleasures,
that must qualify that Grossness which
would otherwise render them nauseating
and distasteful ; and that must make every
Repast a rational Entertainment.

What should farther be a strong *Motive*
with us in this Respect to *delight in GOD*
is, that He has forbidden us no Enjoyment,
ordinarily speaking, but what, upon the
Whole, will bring more Pain than Pleasure ;
nor has he enjoined us any Duty but what,
all Things considered, will yield us greater
Degrees of Pleasure than of Pain. True
indeed it is, that the great Duty of *Repent-*
ance does, in the Nature of it, imply *Sor-*
row. But then this Sorrow is productive of,
and succeeded by, a lasting substantial Joy.
Though our Reformation has it's Pangs, yet
we shall *no more remember the Anguish, for*
Joy that a new Man is born into the World.

If that Variety of *Natural* Evils which
appear in the World, and continually break
in upon Men's Enjoyment of sensual Plea-
sures, should be thought any Objection
against

S E R M.
VIII.

against what has been advanced in Recommendation of the Duty of *Delighting in GOD*; let it be remembered, that *Natural Evils*, such as Pain, Sicknefs, and Calamity, are graciously designed by GOD as *Moral Goods*, by making us reflect and think; by teaching us Patience and Resignation; and by weaning our Affections from Things below. *Every Branch that beareth not Fruit, He taketh away; and every Branch that beareth Fruit, He purgeth, or pruneth, that it may bring forth more Fruit*: That is, by some painful Operation, which beareth a Resemblance to pruning, He maketh every Good Man more Good; as the Branch that bore Fruit before, becometh more fruitful, and *deriveth new Strength and additional Vigour from the very Steel*.

So that, in short, those Restraints on Account of which Religion may, at first Sight, appear to be an *Enemy* to sensual Gratification, are in Fact Instances of Her real *Friendship* to it. Even *Self-denial* is enjoined by GOD as the best Preservative of *Self-enjoyment*; since to enjoy ourselves we must learn to curb our Appetites: And all *seeming Severity* is really *Indulgence* upon the Whole. But farther:

From the Pleasures of the *Senses* let us proceed one Step higher to those of the *Imagination*. And these are chiefly *Beauty, Grandeur and Novelty*.

As

As for the First : If the *Beauty* of the visible World affect us, let us consider, Who it is, that has poured out this Beauty upon the Creation, Himself infinitely more beautiful, lovely, and glorious; while He stands unseen behind the Workmanship of His own Hand.

S E R M.
VIII.

We cannot unravel any one Thing in the *Drama* of Nature, without bringing a GOD upon the Scene. Every Thing *material* convinceth us, that there is, and must be, something *immaterial* behind the Curtain.

When we see the Sun shine forth in it's Lustre, and Nature appearing in it's most advantageous Dress, how can we avoid turning our Thoughts upwards toward that Being, whose *Handy-work* that Sun shews, and whose *Glory* it declares, in a Language understood by all Mankind; a Language, the Sounds whereof are gone into all Lands, and its Words into the Ends of the World. Every Field, every Flower, contains the most powerful, the most edifying, Rhetorick to excite in Us the Love of that Being, who hath clothed the Lilies of the Field with that elegant Simplicity, which was superior to Solomon's Pomp, when arrayed in all his Glory. An unthinking Mind, or a Mind that is immersed in Sensuality, may without any Emotions of Gratitude or Piety, survey the delightful Round of the

N

Seasons,

SER.M.
VIII.

Seasons, and the rich Furniture of the Earth, together with that numerous Family of living Creatures, for whose common Benefit the universal Parent has designed it: A Man of this Turn may, I say, behold that Variety of Scenes which diversify the Face of the Creation, and present the most agreeable Images to the Mind, with a tasteless Indifference and Coldness to that Being, who has poured out such Stores of His Bounty upon it. But He, who will be at any Expence of Thinking, will *ponder these Things*, till, by repeated Reflections, *the Fire is kindled* towards HIM, who has enriched the World with such a Profusion of Good; has beautified it with such Order and Harmony; and has ennobled it with such astonishing Magnificence and Grandeur.

Which puts me in Mind of the *Second* Pleasure of the Imagination, arising from *Greatness*.

The Soul is naturally formed for the Love of what is great and marvellous. An august and stupendous Building; a spacious and unbounded Prospect; the unmeasurable Expanse of the Creation; naturally raise the Soul into an unusual Elevation, and fill it with sublime and vast Ideas. Now this Desire of surveying what is great, solemn and majestick, was probably stamped upon our Nature for This very Purpose, that we might

might take Delight in contemplating Him, of whose Greatness there is *no End*. If we are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at the View of any Thing grand and magnificent; If our Astonishment rises higher in Proportion to the greater Magnificence of the Object; it must be improved into the highest Pitch, when we have a direct and immediate Knowledge of HIM, whose Essence is higher than Heaven, and deeper than Hell, the Measure whereof is broader than the Sea, and longer than the Earth. Every Body knows, we hate nothing more than Confinement in a Prospect: The Soul loves to have a free and unlimited Range. And if even here, under all the Incumbrances of the Body, the Soul expresses such a strong Desire for Infinitude; how much more will it delight therein, when unembarrassed by any Clogs or Impediments of Matter?

The next Pleasure of the Imagination is That which is excited by *Novelty*.

How comes it, that we are generally in Pursuit of something New; and yet, when we are possessed of it, and the Object becomes familiar to us, it fades and languishes in our Eyes, and palls upon the Sense? Does not Nature, by the repeated Proofs of the Unsatisfactoriness of Things here below, admonish us to fix our Rest upon *Him*, who alone can satisfy, and even exceed our

SERM.
VIII.

Wishes? Whom the more we know, the more amiable we shall find Him, and find no End of his Perfections.

The Deity is to human Minds what the Ocean is to narrow Vessels. They may receive some imperfect Notices; They may take in as much as their scanty Dimensions will admit; and yet there will remain an infinite Surplus still, which we want Room to receive; wishing that human Nature was advanced to an higher Perfection, that the Divine Nature might be better understood, more perfectly loved, and more worthily praised.

Why, in short, does the Fancy generally paint Things beyond the Life? Why does the Happiness proposed from Earthly Objects seldom or never answer that lively Imagery and gay Colouring in which we had represented them? Has not the Deity so ordered it, that nothing here should fully equal our Ideas, and answer our Expectations, but that the Powers and Extent of the Imagination should go beyond the Reality of Things; for this very Reason, that we might fix our Thoughts upon those Objects, the Reality and Perfection of which shall exceed the utmost Stretch of the Imagination, and which *it hath not entered into the Heart of Man to conceive?*

From the Pleasures of the *Imagination* let us proceed to those of a *Moral and Intel-*

Intellectual Nature. And first let us consider S E R M.
the Pleasures of *Benevolence.* VIII.

If we are of *Benevolent* Dispositions ; if it is a Pleasure to us to please others, and to see them happy ; how must we delight in That Being, who is infinitely great and happy in His own Nature, and infinitely good and communicative of Happiness to His Creatures ! How must we rejoice in the Thought, that the Universe is under His Administration, who will make Virtue triumphant, who will not inflict Misery upon any one Individual, any farther than is necessary for the Good of the Whole ! But above all, what generous and liberal Thoughts shall we cherish of that Person, who throughout his Life made Virtue appear to be what it is, a lovely Form ; and by his Death made *Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World!*—How must it heighten our Benevolence to Man, as well as our Love to GOD, to think, that all those whom we wish well to, shall, upon the easy Terms of Faith and Repentance, be *Heirs of GOD, and Joins-heirs with CHRIST* ; no Dregs of Guilt remaining to defile the pure Current of their Happiness, no Storms of Adversity or Misfortune to disturb or ruffle it ! These are the genuine Consequences of a Relish for Benevolence, as well as proper Incentives to the Love of GOD.

SERM.
VIII.

No Doubt, our highest Affection, in the Reason of the Thing, is a Tribute due to GOD considered as the highest Good. Yet it must also be granted, that dry and abstracted Reasons of Love operate very faintly, unless we take into the Account those affecting Considerations of His being our Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and universal Benefactor and Parent. For this Cause the Scripture tells us, *we love GOD because He first loved us.* His Internal and *Essential* Excellency may claim our Admiration, and convince the Understanding, that we ought to love Him; but His *Relative* Dignity, His making, preserving and redeeming us, touch the inmost Springs and Movements of our Nature, and powerfully work upon the Will and Passions, the two active Principles in the Mind of Man.

Let then, O Man, thy labouring Soul strive to conceive (for 'tis impossible to express) what an immense Debt of Gratitude thou owest to Him, who, by His Creating Goodness, called Thee out of Nothing to make Thee a Partaker of Reason, and even a Sharer of Immortality with Himself: Who, by His Preserving Goodness, designs to conduct Thee safe through the various Stages of thy Eternal Existence: And who, by His Redeeming Goodness, hath prepared for Thee an Happiness too big for the
Com-

Comprehension of an human Understanding. S E R M. VIII.
Canst Thou receive such Endearments of Love to Thee and all Mankind with Insensibility and Coldness? Shouldst thou treat a tender Parent with an undutiful Behaviour, we would call Thee an unnatural Monster; shouldst Thou treat a generous Benefactor with a disobliging Behaviour, we would call Thee base and ungrateful: Nay, shouldst Thou use a brute Creature, which expressed his Kindness in the most significant Manner he could, with Cruelty, we would brand Thee with the Names of unmerciful and hard-hearted. But in the whole Compass of Language what Word is expressive enough to paint the black Ingratitude of That Man, who is unaffected by, and entirely regardless of, the Goodness of his Creator, and the Mercies of his Saviour? Did He, the *Lord of Life and Glory*, condescend to make the first Advances of Love and Friendship to us; and shall not we cherish an affectionate Remembrance, and a grateful Resentment of these His invaluable Favours?

On the other Hand, what a delightful Complacency must diffuse itself over the Mind of Him, who has the least Tincture of Good-will to the Universe, to consider, that what he wished is brought about, the Happiness of the whole Universe of Rational Creatures, if it is not their own Fault;

S E R M.
VIII.

and to think at the same Time that he himself is in the happy Number of them? To reflect, that He, who *spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for our sakes,* will with Him also freely give us all Things, must beget in us a *Delight* in Him, of whom are all Things as He is our Creator, through whom are all Things as He is our Preserver, and to whom are all Things as He is our Final Happiness and Sovereign Good.

But this leads me from the Pleasures of *Benevolence* to consider Those of *Hope* and *Expectation*.

Now present Hope is present Good; and a certain *Expectation* of future Blessings is in some Measure a *Blessing in Hand*. Hope is the great Cordial that must sweeten Life, and make the nauseous Draught go down. We are indigent Creatures, insufficient of ourselves for our own Happiness, and therefore ever seeking it somewhere else. But, *where to seek it?* there is the Question. The thoughtful and pensive, who are Enemies to the Vanities of Life, are eaten up with (what is the greatest Vanity of all) a perpetual *Vexation of Spirit*; unless they direct their Thoughts to, and *cast their Care upon, GOD*: No: If there were not another Life, our Business would be, not to *alarm* the thinking Faculty, but to *lull* our too unquiet Thoughts to *Rest*. Our Mind would be, like
a fro-

a froward Child, ever crying and fretful whilst awake; and therefore to be played and lulled asleep as fast as possible. And our main Happiness would be to steal ourselves gently and insensibly from a feeling of, or Reflection upon, our Misery.

SERM.
VIII.

If Man had an ample Fund of Happiness within himself without any Deficiency; whence is it that he is continually looking out abroad for foreign Amusements? Amusements, which rather suspend the Sense of Uneasiness, than give any substantial Satisfaction; which keep the Soul in an even Poise between Pleasure and Pain, and are of no other Use but to make us insensible of the Tedioufness of living, to fill up the vacant Spaces of Time, and to shut out that importunate Intruder Self-reflection. Whence is it that That restless Thing, the Soul, too enterprizing to trace every Thing, *yea, the deep Things of GOD*, is yet too cowardly to inquire into itself, and to view the inward Workings of that ever-loved, yet ever-avoided Object, Itself? Whence is it that the Mind, whose active Energy prompts it to give a free and unconfined Range to her Thoughts on other Subjects; nay, to make, were that possible, the Tour of the whole Universe, yet when she comes to dwell at Home, and to survey the *little World* within, flags in her Vivacity, feels herself in a forlorn Condition, and finds a Drowsiness
and

SERM.
VIII.

and melancholy Gloom hanging upon her? Whence is it, but because the Soul, whenever it turns it's Thoughts inward, finds within itself a frightful Void of solid Happiness without any Possibility of filling it up?

Indeed in a Circle of gay Follies, or in a Multiplicity of Business, when different Objects are in Succession continually striking upon the Mind, the Capacity of the Soul is taken up, and it forgets that inward Poverty and Indigence, which nothing can effectually relieve but the unsearchable Riches of the Love of GOD: But when we step aside from the Noise and beaten Tracks of Life into Solitude and Retirement, having no Employment to fix, no Recreation to dissipate, our Thoughts; we soon find that we are an insupportable Burden to ourselves without our GOD. Hence none is more miserable than a Man distracted with Variety of Business, excepting Him, who has no Business, no Amusement, at all. Recreations and *Pastimes*, properly so called (for they serve for no other End but to pass away our Time) may sooth the Mind into a pleasing Forgetfulness of it's Misery. But nothing can give us an exquisite Relish and Enjoyment of this Life but the Hopes of a better through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST.

Should any Person ask then, "Who will shew us any Good? Who will point out

“out the Way to Felicity to us?” We must answer in the *Psalmist's* Words, *LORD, lift THOU up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.* SERM.
VIII

What is Happiness but the Employment of the Faculties of our Souls upon suitable Objects? How great then must our *Hope*, how *delightful* our Prospect, or rather Anticipation of Happiness be, when our Understandings are employed, (and we are assured they ever shall be employed) in contemplating Him who is infinite Truth; and our Affections in loving Him who is infinite Goodness! What a rational Scheme of Bliss have the Scriptures therefore marked out to us, when they tell us that, as to our *Wills* and *Affections*, *Whom have we in Heaven but GOD?* and *there is none upon Earth that we should desire in Comparison with GOD.* In Comparison, the *Psalmist* says, to intimate that we may love other Things *subordinately* to Him. *Our Flesh and our Heart may fail; but GOD is the Strength of our Heart, and our Portion for ever.* And, in other Places, that *we shall be filled with all the Fullness of GOD; and that we shall drink of His Pleasures as out of a River.* And then, as to our Understandings, that *we shall know as we ourselves are known; that in GOD's Light we shall see Light; and that we shall see Him as He is.* And how greatly (too greatly for our present

SERM.
VIII.

present far unequal Conceptions) will the Understanding be enlightened, when GOD shall shine forth *immediately* upon it, in the Fulness of His Glory, when we shall be as conscious of His enlivening Presence as we are of our own Existence; as sensible of His unerring Approbation, as we are of the Testimony of our own Consciences!

O blessed State, when I shall *behold Face to Face*, or have a *direct* View of, what is infinitely lovely! love what I behold! and be made happy in the Enjoyment of what I love! the First and best of Beings; great and marvellous in His Works; just and righteous in His Ways; but infinite and incomprehensible in His Nature!

GOD hath styled himself *Light*: And as the whole material Creation would be involved in one black, horrid, and uncomfortable Gloom, if Light did not enliven it with it's Smiles, and beautify it with a rich Variety of Colours; so would the spiritual Creation live in an Eternal *Blackness of Darkness*, did not GOD lift up the *Light of His Countenance* upon it; brightening it with the Beams of His Truth, and chearing it with the Influence of His Favour.

In short, and to conclude: Earthly Objects may indeed swell and puff up the Soul with unsubstantial Blifs; but Nothing can fill up every Void in the Mind, and satisfy

the whole Compass of our Desires with the SERM.
VIII.
Fulness of solid and unmingled Happiness, but that supreme Good, who pervades every Part of Matter, fills infinite Space, and *inhabits Eternity*; That Being, *who is above All, and through All, and in us All!*

First and best of Beings! before whom *ten Thousand Angels stand, and ten Thousand Times ten Thousand minister unto Thee!* Look down from that Variety of exalted Creatures; Angels, Arch-Angels, Cherubim and Seraphim, approaching gradually nearer the Top of the Scale, but still at an infinite Distance from thy Perfections! Look down from *Them* upon *Us*, whom Thou hast made the lowest of accountable Beings — upon *Us*, who have made ourselves yet lower by our manifold Sins and Transgressions. Imprint this Truth deep in Proportion to it's Value — Man's sickly distempered Soul, though it should for ever turn and shift from Side to Side in Search of Quiet, can rest in nothing but Thee, it's Pillar and Support here, in full Trust of the Fulness of Joy hereafter.

S E R M O N IX.

The Duty of honouring the KING
founded on the Fear of GOD.

I P E T. ii. 17.

Fear GOD. Honour the KING.

S E R M.
IX.

IN the following Discourse I shall shew,
Ist, How far these two Precepts delivered
in the Text are connected.

II^{dly}, I shall endeavour to enforce Obe-
dience to the King. And then,

III^{dly}, Make some Reflexions fuitable to
the present Solemnity.

These two Precepts, however distinct
and independent they may seem, have yet a
close and inseparable Alliance. And indeed
every Duty, whether of a Subject to his
King, or of any one Man to another, must
ultimately be resolved into the Will of
GOD, into a Principle of Obedience
to

to Him. This is the Basis of Morality SERM. IX. according to Scripture. The Love of GOD is there called *the first and great Commandment*, from which all the rest are deduced. We are commanded to *be Holy because GOD is Holy*. Whatsoever we do, we are to do it heartily, as unto the LORD, not unto Man. I grant that Things are not merely and solely good because GOD has commanded them, but that he has commanded them because they are good ; and therefore there is a Fitness in Things antecedent to GOD's Command. What inclines GOD to command such Things is their *natural* Fitness, *i. e.* their Tendency to promote either the common Good, or our own : But what makes our Observance of them *morally* good is our chusing to act in Obedience to His Command. Set aside the Will of GOD, who will reward and punish us as we have done well or ill, and moral Virtue will only be something occasional ; to be observed or neglected as it falls in with, or crosses, our favourite Interests ; but it will never be a fixed, invariable Rule of Action upon all Occasions and Emergencies, that is, it will not be Virtue. For Virtue must be something fixed, and indispensable, and universally obligatory.

If the Will and Sanctions of GOD, and a future State, were left out of the Question,
to

S. E. R. M.

IX.

to pursue what tends to the common Good (if done only with a View to serve our present Interest) would be nothing but Convenience and Policy; but if done without any View to our present Interest, nay, when it was against our present Interest, would be Madness and Folly. For certainly it would be Madness and Folly to promote the Happiness of others at the Expence of our own, when we had no Equivalent in Reversion. 'Tis enthusiastical to pretend to love others *better* than ourselves, and to prefer their Happiness to our own. The only Rule of right Reason, in him who expects no other Life, is, to make the best of this. And so, upon Occasion, all the Rules of what we now call Virtue would be reversed; it would be reasonable to break through any or all of them, to make Life happy when we could; and it would be reasonable to throw up Life when we could not. Falshood, Fraud, Rapine, Self-murder, or any other Murder, would be all reasonable as often as solid Convenience required it. For as certain as it is that each Man loves himself better than others, so certainly reasonable it would be that He never should sacrifice his own Ease and Happiness to continue that of His Fellow-creature, when he was not likely to be Gainer by it in the Whole of his Existence.

A Man

A Man of unprejudiced Sense must soon be convinced that to make the whole Chain of Duties, branched out into infinite Variety of Links, hold firm and indissoluble, the first Link of the Chain must be fastened to the Throne of GOD, the consummate Standard of Perfection in Himself, and the unerring Judge of Perfection in others. Take away the Notion of a future State, and the fine Notions of abstract Finesses, intellectual Order and moral Beauty will have but small Influence upon a Man in deep Distress. *An exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory* will turn the Scales, and preponderate in Favour of Virtue against the greatest Affliction; which in that View will appear light and momentary: But weigh cold, unaffected Thought of I know not what abstract Finesses, of the Beauty and Loveliness of Virtue, against the strong Pressure of urgent Misery (when we may get out of it by Knavery and Falshood) and it will be found wanting in the Balance; *lighter than Vanity*, and nothing.

Either therefore We must say, that Virtue is not universally obligatory, which is contrary to the Ideas of Virtue; or We must say, that We are obliged to practise Virtue in all Cases of Extremity and Distress, though We shall be never the better for it; though We shall be finally Losers

O

by

S E R M.
IX.

S E R M. by it : which is contrary to common Sense :
 IX. —or We must found Virue on the Will of
 the Deity, who alone can make it our
 Interest to practise Virtue in all Cases. He
 alone can induce a solid, uniform, unvarying
 Obligation, who has the Sum total of our
 Existence at his Disposal, who can make our
 Happiness or Misery commensurate to our
 Existence.

Thus I have proved what Connexion
 there is between fearing GOD and honour-
 ing the King ; and that this Duty, as well
 as other social Duties, must ultimately
 terminate in this grand Principle of fearing
 and obeying that Being, whose Vicegerents
 Kings are ; by whom *Kings reign, and
 Princes decree Justice.* This at least must
 be granted, that this is the only Principle
 which can affect our Conscience, and make
 us pay a conscientious Obedience to His
 Majesty. For Conscience supposeth us ac-
 countable Beings—— But accountable to
 what ? Not to I know not what abstract
 Fittnesses, Chimeras, abstract Ideas in our
 own Head. Conscience must suppose us
 accountable to some Superior, which Su-
 perior must be none but GOD. For hu-
 man Laws and Lawgivers cannot reach
 that internal and invisible Principle, the
 Conscience. They may restrain the outward
 Action : But they cannot make us practise
 Virtue from the Heart. Nothing conse-
 quently

quently but the Will of GOD can make us S E R M.
subject for Conscience sake. IX.

But there is a farther Connexion between the two Precepts, which is this, that, *2dly*, loose Notions of GOD and Religion are destructive to good Government:

What can We expect will be the Consequence when once the Religion of our fine Gentlemen shall become the Religion of People in low Life? What but *Confusion and every evil Work*? Will the poor People, when once they have imbibed the fashionable Religion, or rather no Religion, submit to the Hardships of Poverty? Will they not rather strive to relieve themselves by Force, Fraud and Robbery, if they can? If they cannot, why then lanch out into a World unknown, before they have received a Summons thither. This is no idle Dream; We see the Effects of Irreligion too plainly, particularly in a late tragical Instance of complicated Wickedness; which an inveterate Hatred to Poverty gave Occasion to. And from hence we may learn, to what unnatural Extremities, even to that of a Parent murdering in cold Blood his own Child, People proceed, when they have formed such loose Notions of GOD's Goodness as to discard all Apprehensions of his Wrath and Displeasure. Which is too often the Case of those who, instead of acquiescing in that unerring Rule, the

S E R M. by it : which is contrary to common Sense :
 IX. —or We must found Virue on the Will of
 the Deity, who alone can make it our
 Interest to practise Virtue in all Cases. He
 alone can induce a solid, uniform, unvarying
 Obligation, who has the Sum total of our
 Existence at his Disposal, who can make our
 Happiness or Misery commensurate to our
 Existence.

Thus I have proved what Connexion
 there is between fearing GOD and honour-
 ing the King ; and that this Duty, as well
 as other social Duties, must ultimately
 terminate in this grand Principle of fearing
 and obeying that Being, whose Vicegerents
 Kings are ; by whom *Kings reign, and
 Princes decree Justice*. This at least must
 be granted, that this is the only Principle
 which can affect our Conscience, and make
 us pay a conscientious Obedience to His
 Majesty. For Conscience supposeth us ac-
 countable Beings—— But accountable to
 what ? Not to I know not what abstract
 Finesses, Chimeras, abstract Ideas in our
 own Head. Conscience must suppose us
 accountable to some Superior, which Su-
 perior must be none but GOD. For hu-
 man Laws and Lawgivers cannot reach
 that internal and invisible Principle, the
 Conscience. They may restrain the outward
 Action : But they cannot make us practise
 Virtue from the Heart. Nothing conse-
 quently

quently but the Will of GOD can make us S E R M.
subject for Conscience sake. IX.

But there is a farther Connexion between the two Precepts, which is this, that, *2dly*, loose Notions of GOD and Religion are destructive to good Government:

What can We expect will be the Consequence when once the Religion of our fine Gentlemen shall become the Religion of People in low Life? What but *Confusion and every evil Work*? Will the poor People, when once they have imbibed the fashionable Religion, or rather no Religion, submit to the Hardships of Poverty? Will they not rather strive to relieve themselves by Force, Fraud and Robbery, if they can? If they cannot, why then lanch out into a World unknown, before they have received a Summons thither. This is no idle Dream; We see the Effects of Irreligion too plainly, particularly in a late tragical Instance of complicated Wickedness; which an inveterate Hatred to Poverty gave Occasion to. And from hence we may learn, to what unnatural Extremities, even to that of a Parent murdering in cold Blood his own Child, People proceed, when they have formed such loose Notions of GOD's Goodness as to discard all Apprehensions of his Wrath and Displeasure. Which is too often the Case of those who, instead of acquiescing in that unerring Rule, the

S E R M.

I X.

Word of GOD, form their Notions of
 GOD from their own narrow self-conceited
 Understandings.

I know those who have left no Stone unturned to propagate loose Principles would not be understood to be Enemies to Religion in General. No, though they depreciate Christianity, they extol Natural Religion. Now not to observe, that these Men hang out false Colours in their Writings, for they speak a different Language where they can be free; yet What is this Natural Religion of which *We* read so much in their Writings, and see so little in their Practice? If they mean by it a Religion containing every Fitness whatever, every Fitness in general that is founded in the Reason and Nature of Things; this is indeed an excellent Religion. But then I doubt We must be omniscient to comprehend it, or to take in *every* Fitness that is founded in Reason. But if they mean by it, whatever is discoverable by our unenlightened Reason; such a Collection of Rules as every Man can make for himself by the Use of his own Faculties, under whatever, though the most disadvantageous, Circumstances; this Religion must be as imperfect, as variable, as People's Capacities, Means and Opportunities of Knowledge are different. In one Man's Scheme of Duty, Fornication will be allowed, because he has
 not

not Leisure, Capacity or Inclination to trace S E R M.
the Duty of Chastity, through a long Chain I X.
of Propositions, up to it's First Fountain-
head. In another's, Self-murder, the Ha-
tred of Enemies, and the like. In ano-
ther's, public Worship, if not private too,
will be left out; as indeed the Practice of
our Infidels too plainly shew it is. Natural
Religion then, as discoverable by our own
Capacities, must be very vague, uncertain
and undetermined; whereas Christianity
proposes to us one stated, settled and regular
Scheme of Action. The former can but
give us a very narrow and confined Prospect
of another World; whereas by the latter
we command a full and open View. It
insures to us those great and everlasting
Rewards; which, as they are infinitely dis-
proportioned to our Worth, it would be the
highest Presumption to expect without the
revealed Mercies of GOD, and the Merits
of our Saviour. All that Reason can prove
here is only this; that whoever has acted
up to the best Light he could have, shall
here or hereafter find His Happiness pre-
ponderate His Misery. For when GOD's
Goodness has bestowed upon every Crea-
ture, that is not wanting to himself, a Pre-
ponderancy of Bliss, His infinite Wisdom
may dispose of the Surplus, that remains
beyond this, as He pleases. It can never
prove to us that incorruptible Happiness

S E R M.

IX.

which our Saviour has by His Gospel displayed, and by His Merits insured, to us; a Happiness unmixed in its Kind, exceeding in Degree, and eternal in Duration; that uninterrupted Enjoyment of Virtue, Truth and Pleasure, without any Alloy of Vice, Falshood or Pain.

I cannot but conclude then, that the Design of these Men is to strike at Religion in General. For any wise Man, that chuses to be of any Religion at all, would chuse to be of the Christian; the best Religion, the most worthy of GOD, the best calculated for the Good of Society, as well as of Individuals. And what confirms me in this Opinion is, that they must know that pure, uncorrupt, Natural Religion never did, never will, subsist in any Country independently of Revealed. It is a wild and visionary Scheme; and whoever will prove, that any Nation ever did form a complete System of Religion, comprehending all our Duties, whether to GOD, our Fellow-creatures or Ourselves, without any Assurances from Heaven, must produce some History that was never heard of before, or discover some Nation that was never known before.

We are, I hope, in no immediate Danger of Popery: But where these Principles, so openly avowed, so widely propagated, will end, GOD only knows. The *Pretender's* Cause is now, I think, desperate, and

and may it always continue so—But there is one Observation which I cannot help making, namely, that if We should ever have the Misfortune, which GOD forbid, to see Him settled on the Throne, Irreligion must be the Door by which He enters. For Irreligion will pave the Way, however like a Paradox it may sound, to Superstition, and Superstition, Popish Superstition, to a Popish Government. The Person who, not many Years since, laboured the most in the Cause of Infidelity, was confessedly a Papist before the Revolution; and I never heard, that he professed any other Religion after. And in his last elaborate System of Infidelity he sometimes drops the Mask, and cannot help giving broad Hints of his good Will to that Religion. The Popish Emis-saries, who swarm among us, are known to personate *Deists*, to unite their Endeavours heartily with theirs, and have some of them been heard to declare, they wish no greater Advantage to their Cause, than to see our People set loose from all Religion. They triumph and say, *There, there, so would We have it.* They find their Account in it, and indeed have already had by this Means a plentiful Harvest of Proselytes: And it is Matter of Fact, that vulgar and untutored Minds, the more they are despoiled of Religion, the sooner they fall

S E R M.
I X.

SERM. an easy and defenceless Prey to the worst of
IX. Religions, Popery.

We know the Transition is very easy from Superstition to Infidelity; and I should be glad to know, why it should not be as easy from Infidelity to Superstition; since we are very apt to run from one Extream to another. The present declared Scheme of *Deism* is this; that People must be left to collect every one a Religion for himself independently, according as their Ignorance, Short-sightedness, or Passions, which to be sure they will call their Reason, shall mislead. Now as the best King that ever sat on the Throne could not wish a Nation more Happiness than that the Precepts of the Gospel should be universally obeyed, and the Doctrines of it, those strong Incentives to Virtue, universally believed through his Kingdom; so the most ill-natured Being, the most accursed Spirit, could not wish a Nation greater Confusion than their Scheme, so big with Evils, would occasion if it should take Place. The Consequence of which would be, that as soon as the People opened their Eyes, and saw the numerous Train of Miseries that it had plunged them into, how an unrestrained Freedom of Thought had every where produced a correspondent Freedom in Action, they would conceive an utter Abhorrence of what had been the Source of so many Evils; and re-

solved to fly precipitately through an inveterate, undistinguishing Hatred, as far as ever they could get from Infidelity (the farther, they would think, the better) they would run into the very Jaws of Popery. They might indeed rove about for a while pleased in the Mazes of Error ; but weary of so many crude Notions, weary of wandering, ever *seeking Rest, and finding none*, they might be tempted at last to take up with a pretended infallible Guide. Thus this Nation would tread in a Round of Error. The Cant and Enthusiasm in the Time of the grand Rebellion begat in the next Generation an abandoned Profaneness and Immorality, which was productive of Infidelity, which hath been growing ever since; and Infidelity may at last, if it goes on, produce Enthusiasm, or something worse. We dance in a Circle, and may end just in the same Point where we set out.

Be this as it will; It is but too melancholy a Prospect that the Youth of the Nation are almost universally poisoned in their Principles, and those who should be the Flower of the Nation, are, alas ! but too generally become the very Dregs of it. Formerly indeed, as well as now, the Sallies of youthful Blood would hurry them into several Extravagances and Irregularities ; yet still their Principles continued sound and uncorrupt, which would exert themselves as soon as the youthful

SERM.
IX.

S E R M.
IX.

ful Ferment abated. But now they take Care to corrupt their Principles first; which ever after shuts up all Avenues to a Reformation. Hence that flagrant Contempt of all Authority divine and human. Hence that avowed Disregard to all Subordination of Servants to their Masters, Children to their Parents, Subjects to their King. And why should Those wonder at this, who have taken no Care to cultivate a due Use of the greatest Regard, the Foundation of all the Rest, that of a Creature to His Creator.

To conclude this Head; one cannot more effectually shew a Zeal for his Majesty, who has declared he will make the Interest of Religion his first and chief Concern, than by shewing a Detestation of those Principles, which would unhinge his Government. Add to this, that a National Impiety, when once the People had filled up the *Measure of their Iniquity*, never failed, as all Histories inform us, to draw down a National Vengeance. But this is too melancholy a Subject to be dwelt upon: I hasten therefore,

Illy, To enforce Obedience to the King.

Now as GOD has made us sociable Creatures, He must *will* Society—consequently He must *will* whatever is necessary to Society—There can be no Society without some Government. The very Idea of
Society

Society includes Superiors and Inferiors—

SERM.
IX.

There can be no Government without Honour, Homage and Obedience to Governours. Thus Government in General is the Will and Institution of GOD: though the particular Forms and Modes of Government, except the *Israelitish*, are plainly of human Institution. The Scripture orders us to be *subject to the Powers that be*. It hath enjoined Obedience in General without clogging it with particular Exceptions; which was wisely done, and worthy of it's divine Author. Cases of Necessity are always implied, and therefore need not be specified. The Misfortune is, People are apt rather to imagine Cases of Necessity of a Resistance, where there are none, than not to feel them when they really are such. They are apt to fancy solid and substantial Grievances without a just Cause, and to carry their Resentment too far when there is a just Cause. 'Tis hard to hit, in some Cases at least, the dividing Point between Rebellion and Resistance, and to say, *Hitherto shalt thou go in thy passive Obedience, and no farther*. As therefore thin Partitions, in some Cases, divide the Bounds between Rebellion and Resistance, it was best to inculcate the Doctrine of Obedience at large without express Restrictions.

The Scripture need not be explicit on this Head. When Cases of Necessity happen,

S E R M.
IX.

pen, the Voice of Nature, in every free Nation where their Minds are not gradually prepared for Slavery, the Voice of Nature speaks within us in the most importunate and feeling Manner, demands an Audience, and with the most powerful and awakening Call, intimates to us, that it could never be the Design of that Being, who wills the Happiness of all his Creatures, that the Bulk of a Nation should be made miserable by the arbitrary and lawless Pleasure of a Tyrant. Such a Case of Necessity there was before the Revolution, when the Vitals of our Constitution both in Church and State were wounded; when Power was assumed to lay asleep, and dispense with, our Laws (the Security of our Property) and Popery and Slavery had like to have been intailed upon us. And we see by the universal Bent of the People, who acceded to the glorious Scheme, that human Nature is not over-dull of Apprehension, when aggrieved in so extraordinary a Manner. The Nobility and Populace, the Gentry and Clergy, with united Hearts combined in the Scheme of our Deliverance. And as long as We have any Regard for our Constitution, as long as We set any Value upon the two most valuable Things, the pure, uncorrupt Christian Religion as professed by the Church of *England*, and our Liberties, which were both in imminent Danger of being lost; We ought

ought to express a Regard for our Deliverer S E R M.
at that Juncture, who took Care, as far as I X.
in him lay, to perpetuate the Blessing, and
to transmit it to our Posterity, by settling
the Crown upon the present illustrious
Royal Family (as our surest Barrier against
the Evils We were before exposed to)
where may it long continue! as long as any
Branch of the Family remains! The Boun-
daries between the Prerogative of the King,
and the Liberties of the People, were then
better adjusted, and have continued down
to us, than they had been before. And
notwithstanding all the late Outcries, all
the virulent Libels against his Majesty's
Government, it is certain We enjoy more
Liberty than any well regulated Government
besides can pretend to, of which those very
Libels are a Proof. We cannot be said
to honour the King, if We do not discoun-
tenance all those groundless Clamours, which
tend to alienate the Affection of his People,
to clog the Wheels of His Government, and
to embarrass the Administration. Let us
then, as far as the Sphere of our Power
extends, promote a dutiful Submission, and
instil loyal Principles. May all Schemes,
that tend to bring in Popery, and it's con-
stant Attendant, Slavery, or to poison the
Minds of Men with Republican Principles,
be blasted. May the King long live happy
in his numerous Progeny, happy in the
Affections

S E R M.

IX.

Affections and Hearts of his People. And may we live long happy in His paternal Regard and Rule over us. Let us *fear the LORD, and the King*, and not meddle with those turbulent Spirits who are given to Change.

To speak Evil of the Ruler of the People, and of Dignities, is a Vice expressly forbidden in Scripture. On the other Hand, to extol them while they are upon the Throne, creates a Suspicion of some sinister Views and By-ends. And indeed Praises are seldom valuable, but when they come from those who can dispraise with Impunity. In the present Case they are intirely needless, it being a Consideration of sufficient Weight to inforce Obedience, that whoever would attempt to new-model the Government, or to displace the present Royal Family, must embark, it is to be hoped, in an impracticable Scheme. But if he should succeed in his Attempts, he must throw this Kingdom into Convulsions, and leave us in a much worse State than He found us. He must unhinge the best constituted Government, to give us I know not what in it's Room.

Which brings me,

III^{dly}, To conclude with some Reflexions suitable to the Solemnity.

GOD,

GOD, *who, at sundry Times, and in* SERM.
IX.
divers Manners, hath formerly delivered this Nation from Popery, hath, in a remarkable Manner, rescued Us from the imminent Apprehensions of it arising from the late Rebellion: A Religion which Men of good Nature must abhor for it's many Cruelties; Men of Sense, for it's many Absurdities; and Men of Virtue, for it's large Indulgences to, and Encouragements of Immorality. It was to have been ushered in, and indeed could only be ushered in, by Bloodshed, Rapine and Desolation, and could only have been supported by arbitrary Power, and illegal Acts of Cruelty and Oppression. There could not have been a more terrible Thing than to have had a Popish Prince at the Head of a Protestant Nation: Nor could any Thing have been more unreasonable. For is it reasonable that a Papist, because He is of Royal Descent, should be invested with a Regal Power in a Country, where if he had been born a private Man, he could not in Law, and ought not in Reason to have been intrusted with the lowest Office in the Government? No Nation under the Sun ever permits a Person, who is of a different Religion from it, to sit at the Helm of it; and the Reason is, because it is very absurd to put it in any Man's Power to subvert one Part, and a very valuable Part, of our Constitution,

S E R M. Constitution, who has a strong and rivetted
IX. Inclination to do it.

Promises, that they will secure us in the Possession of our Religion, signify nothing; because such Promises are never to be depended upon. People in Adversity promise generally very fair, who, when they have got the Reins in their Hands, break through all Vows, Ties and Engagements. The same Professions *Queen Mary* made; and how she kept them, let the History of her Reign inform us, which was one continued Scene of Cruelty and Martyrdom; Cruelty, intirely owing to her Religion. For, setting aside that, she was in her own Nature very compassionate. Nay, so far did the Fury of that Reign extend, that the helpless Infant, forced from the Mother's Womb by the Extremity of Tortures, was thrown alive into the Flames as guilty of it's Mother's Heresy, and under the Sentence of the Holy Court, which had condemned the Mother without excepting her Womb *. Such Promises King *James the Second*

* See Bishop *Burnet's History of the Reformation*, Vol. II. p. 314.

Anno 1556. — “ But this *July* there was done in
“ *Gernsey* an Act of as great Inhumanity, as ever was
“ recorded in any Age. A Mother and her two
“ Daughters were burnt at the same Stake; and one
“ of them a married Woman big with Child, when
“ she was in the Fire, the Violence of it bursting her
“ Belly,

Second made with Tears in His Eyes before He came to the Throne; and no sooner was he settled in it, but he left no Stone unturned to destroy the Reformed

SERM.
IX.

“Belly, a Boy fell out into the Flame, that was
“snatched out of it by one that was more merciful
“than the Rest: but after they had a little consulted
“about it, the Infant was thrown in again, and *there*
“was literally baptized with Fire. There were many
“Eye-witnesses of this, who attested it afterwards in
“Queen *Elizabeth's* Time, when the Matter was en-
“quired into, and special Care was taken to have
“full and evident Proofs of it. For indeed the Fact
“was so unnatural, that a Man must either be pos-
“sessed with a very ill Opinion of the Actors, or be
“well satisfied about the Number and Credibility of
“the Witnesses, before he could believe it. But
“Lies and Forgeries are seldom made of Actions done
“in the Face of the Sun, and before so great an
“Assembly as was present at this. Therefore Com-
“plaint being made of it to Queen *Elizabeth*, the
“Dean of *Gernsey* was put in Prison for it; and
“afterwards he, and nine more that were all accessary
“to it, took out their Pardons. So merciful was the
“Government then, to pardon an Action of such a
“monstrous Nature, because done with some Colour
“of Law; since it was said, the Mother was con-
“demned to be burnt, and no Exception was made
“of her Belly.” And *p. 315.* “And above all;
“the Barbarity of *Gernsey* raised that Horror in the
“whole Nation, that there seems ever since that Time
“such an Abhorrence to that Religion to be derived
“down from Father to Son, that it is no Wonder an
“Aversion so deeply rooted, and raised upon such
“Grounds, does, upon every new Provocation, or
“Jealousy of returning to it, break out in most
“violent and convulsive Symptoms.”

S E R M.
IX.

Religion. And yet He was a Prince of many excellent Qualities, and would have made a Nation of *Roman Catholics* very happy. The Truth of it is, We have only the Vices of a *Protestant* Prince to fear, and may be made happy by his Virtues : But the very Piety of a *Popish* Prince obliges him to our Destruction, and in Proportion as he is more religious, he becomes more insupportable.

But how little their Professions, or even Oaths, are to be depended on, the following Instance, related by Historians of their own Persuasion, sufficiently shews ; and I the rather mention it, as it contains a remarkable Instance of a particular Providence. *Uladislaus* King of *Hungary* made a Peace with *Amurath* the Ild Emperor of the *Turks*, for ten Years. The King swore upon the *Gospel*, the *Turk* upon the *Alcoran*, to observe the Treaty then made. The *Pope* dissolved the Oath, and dispensed with the King of *Hungary's* Obligations to it. Upon this he invades the Enemy, unsuspecting any such Thing, and consequently unprepared : A Battle ensues, and *Amurath* was in Danger of being overpowered and defeated. In this Distress, in the Heat of the Action, *Amurath* the Emperor of the *Turks* pulls out of his Bosom the Treaty of Peace which the *Papists* had made, and sworn to observe ; and looking up to the Crucifix,

Crucifix, which was carried before them; S E R M.
IX.
 “ This, says He, O *Christ*, is the League
 “ which *Thy Christians* made with me,
 “ swearing to observe it by Thy Name.
 “ If Thou be a GOD, avenge the Injury
 “ which they have done both to Thee and
 “ me *.”

He had hardly uttered these Words, when the Battle began to turn against them. The King, who had broke his Oath, was slain in the Action; a total Defeat followed, and scarce a third Part of the Army escaped. A signal Proof that there is a particular Providence, as well as that the *Romanists* do not think themselves obliged to keep Faith with *Heretics*, as they call us; but will, in full Possession of Power, recant those Vows as null and void, which they made in Distress.

Nay, those very Men, if any such there were, who, though sincere *Protestants*, favoured the Interests of a *Popish* Pretender, under the groundless Hopes of having what they called Grievances redressed, would have been just in the Case of the Man in the Fable, who, labouring under a Load, tho' not very heavy, called for Death to relieve him from it: but when he came, would have been glad to have compounded for his Burden, by getting quit of a much greater

* See *Knolles's Turkish History*, p. 203.

S E R M.

IX.

Evil. Ever since the Reformation has been established, *from it's Youth up* the Papists have fought against it. But, Thanks be to GOD! *they have not prevailed against it!* Their Attempts have been often, very often providentially defeated, and all their Measures blasted. We are rescued from a Rebellion that would have impoverished the Public, raised several Tumults, made our Country a Seat of War and Desolation, and exposed it to the Attempts of foreign Enemies.

Arbitrary Power would have been absolutely necessary to introduce a corrupt and absurd Religion, and would have been so natural to the Insolence of a Conqueror, that should our Invader have gained the Sovereign Power by Violence, there is no Doubt but He would have preserved it by Tyranny.

Success is not always a Proof that we are the extraordinary Favourites of Heaven. However, if it should not be thought strictly providential, there is something at least extraordinary and unaccountable, that an illustrious Person, whose Years did not promise any distinguished Experience or Conduct in Military Affairs, or incline our Men to repose a firm Confidence in Him, should strike a Terror into a Set of desperate Men, embarked in a desperate, as well as wicked Cause, who were flushed with

repeated Successes : That our Armies should be like so many Cyphers (which however numerous, were of little or no Account) till He, the distinguished Figure, was placed at the Head of them. But from that Time that He was placed the principal Figure at the Head of them, their Numbers became of infinite Value, and could earn or purchase any Thing, however valuable the Acquisition might be. This seems to be *the LORD's Doing*, and it ought to be *marvellous in our Eyes*; that We *were not given over for a Prey* unto them; that We still retain those Blessings that ought to be most dear to us as *Englishmen* and *Protestants*.

S E R M.
IX.

And it is to be hoped, that, by a due Reflexion on the Progress and Event of this Conspiracy, Those who are not convinced of the Wickedness of Attempts of this Kind, must at least see the Vanity, Folly and Madness of them.

To conclude : We have with a commendable Zeal on many Occasions stood in Defence of our Religion at the Expence of the Blood and Treasure of the Nation ; let it not be observed that the Religion of *England*, like a mere Watch-word for an Army, is never valued but when it is to be fought for ; and in Times of Peace laid by and condemned to rust, with other useless Instruments of War.

S E R M.
IX.

To a Zeal for Religion let us add *Charity*, the Crown of all Virtues, and let us lay aside all Hatred, Malice and Desire of Revenge; that We may *with one Heart and one Mouth glorify GOD* for His Mercies, and implore His Protection for ourselves, our King and our Country; that He would give us the Blessings of Peace, and that We may never want a *Protestant* Prince, who has the Interests of Reformed Christianity and the Good of His Country at Heart, to rule over us.

S E R M O N X.

Religious Pleasures productive of
the greatest Happiness.

PROV. iii. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness.

THE turbulent Passions, such as Anger SERM. X.
and Revenge, are disagreeable to our
Nature, because they are open and declared
Enemies to our Repose: they alarm the Soul
at their first Insurrection, and afterwards
command it with an overbearing Tyranny.
But Pleasure steals upon Us by insensible
Degrees, smooths it's Passage to the Heart
by a gentle and insinuating Address, and
softens and disarms the Soul of all it's
Strength. It is more therefore to be guarded
against, as being more dangerous, and
what we have a greater Inclination to.
To arm Us then against the Deceitfulness
of unlawful sensual Delights, I have chosen
the Words of *Solomon*, which set before
Us the genuine and sincere Pleasure which
Religion affords. *Her Ways are Ways of*

SERM. X. *Pleasantness*. In discoursing on which Words
 I shall endeavour to shew,

I. *First*, That the Pleasures of Religion and Virtue are superior to the Pleasures of the Animal Life; and,

II. *Secondly*, How necessarily those must be disappointed, who place their Happiness in any Thing exclusive of Religion and Virtue.

First then I am to shew, that the Pleasures of Religion and Virtue are superior to the Pleasures of the Animal Life.

And here we expect to be told by the Men of Pleasure, that spiritual Satisfaction is nothing but the Product of an over-heated Fancy, and mere Enthusiasm. But we except against *them* as very incompetent Judges. A good Man by tasting the Pleasures of Sense, as far as they are consistent with Reason, is very well qualified to form a true Estimate of them. But the sensual Man, by being an utter Stranger to Religion, is no more able to make a Judgment of the Satisfaction it yields, than a Man of no Taste is to pass a decisive Verdict upon the Elegancies of Poetry, or an Idiot upon a Point of Philosophy.

Dismissing *him* therefore as an improper Judge, we appeal to the Virtuous for the Superiority

Superiority of *rational* Delights; ——— whe- SERM. X.
ther *others* are not for the most Part either
idle Diversions to lull our unquiet Thoughts
to sleep, to sooth the Mind into a Forget-
fulness of itself, and to make Life pass
away unperceived; ——— or rather, whether
they are not tumultuous Joys, that put
Us in a Ferment, and give the Soul too
sudden and violent Emotions. Whereas
virtuous Pleasures produce a serene and
lasting Composure of Mind; they satisfy, but
never satiate. They flow not, like a Torrent,
with a short-lived Noise and Impetuosity;
but like a peaceful River in its own Channel,
strong without Violence, and gentle without
Dulness.

But what am I going to prove ——— that
he who strives to resemble God in Holiness
and Purity, must have superior Gratifica-
tions to him, who makes himself like the
Beasts that perish? A Man that is sunk
into Brutality may indeed deny, that those
Delights must be the highest, which are
seated in the highest and noblest Part of Us,
the Soul: but all the World besides will
own, that the Joys which spring from a
distempered Appetite, and are accompanied
with a Feverishness of Desire, are infinitely
inferior to those of a well-regulated Mind,
and a *Conscience void of Offence towards
God and towards Man.*

We

SERM. X.

We see in several Instances, that Men prefer their Reputation before the Gratification of a brutal Appetite, when put in Competition with each other; and though free from Conscience, they are yet Slaves to Fame. Now the Pleasure of a good Name is seated in the Mind; it comes not from Sensation but Reflection. They own then, that an intellectual Good is preferable to the gross Indulgencies of the Animal Life. But if Reputation, which is but the Shadow of Virtue, claims the Ascendant and Superiority over sensual Enjoyments; certainly Virtue, which is the Substance itself, ought to take Place of them in the true and impartial Estimate of Things.

I would gladly persuade the *Voluptuary* to try an Experiment, and then tell me, when he has cherished the Worthy, and relieved the Distressed by some well-placed Act of Charity; whether the Consciousness of having made an human Heart *to sing for Joy, and the Blessing of him that was ready to perish come upon him*, did not impart a more liberal, manly, and unallayed Complacency, than all the cheating Blandishments and Allurements of Sense. The latter are the Pleasures of the *Brute*; whereas the former are the Pleasures of the *Man*, shall I say? rather of good Angels, nay even of God, who, wanting nothing himself, supplies

supplies the Wants of every other Being. SERM. X.

And what can more transport, what can more ennoble the Soul, than to be so temperate, as to have as few Wants as possible in ourselves; and yet so charitable as to do as much Good as possible to others? A remarkable Instance of this disinterested Virtue, and the superior Satisfaction that attends great and worthy Actions, we have in the generous *Scipio*, who, in the Bloom of Youth, returned his fair Captive, a Master-piece of Beauty, to her future Husband and Parents, whom Conquest gave him an absolute Right to, in the Opinion of the Heathen World. When he refused a considerable Sum of Gold, which was offered by the Parents; and when at last consenting to accept of it, at their repeated Instances, he delivered it as a Part of her Dowry to her Spouse; I desire to know, whether the Commendations, which his own Heart gave him, seconded with the Praises of an Husband and Parents delivered from their jealous Apprehensions, did not inspire him with a greater Exultation of Delight, than the Possession of an injured Woman could have afforded. Their Praises were the sincere Tribute of grateful Hearts, and flowed from the Fulness of their Souls; and Nothing could be more acceptable to *Scipio's* ingenuous Mind, except

SERM. X. except the Consciousness of the Beauty of
 his own Action; whereas the Thoughts of wounding the Honour of a noble Family, and the Peace of aged Parents, must have dashed his Enjoyments, and rendered them distasteful. This delicate Sentiment of *Scipio* was attended with much truer and more solid Satisfaction, than any sensual Gratification could have been; it was the Pleasure of Reason, which will bear repeating in the Mind, and improves upon Reflection.

On the contrary, where the gross Affections take Place, they leave little Room for Virtue; they tarnish the Lustre of the best Actions, and make a Man uneasy and dissatisfied with himself. For he that is good by Halves, labours under a perpetual Discord of Life; he is agitated alternately by Sentiments of unlawful Pleasure and Piety, and passeth his Life in a perpetual Round of following and condemning the same Things. On the one Hand, the Remainders of Virtue and Conscience embitter the Sweets of Vice; and, on the other Hand, the Practice of Vice palls the Relish of Virtue and spiritual Delights. He is neither Brute enough to indulge his Appetites without Remorse, nor Man enough to govern them. Hence he is at perpetual Variance with himself, having just Religion enough to make

make him uneasy, but not enough to make SERM. X.
him happy.

A Man that is divided between Piety and Sin, is like One that lives on the Confines of two mighty contending States; his Breast is a constant Seat of War; and he is sometimes under the Dominion of Virtue, and sometimes under the Tyranny of Vice: whereas a Person of advanced Piety, like One that lives in the inmost Part of the Country, enjoys a secure and unmolested Situation of Soul.

Thus does Uneasiness haunt the Man, that, like a Person struck with the *dead Palsy*, is Part dead and Part alive; and thus it will disquiet him, 'till his Conscience becomes *seared as it were with a hot Iron*, and he thinks there is no Difference between Good and Evil; and to be persuaded of this, is as difficult as to believe there is no God.

But to take a right Estimate of a Man of Pleasure, we should view him in the last Stage of Life. Good God! how contemptible does he appear to the World, and I dare say, even to himself, when he has no more that Sprightliness and outward Form, which raised the Admiration of the Unthinking; nor that Virtue and Knowledge, which is necessary to gain the Esteem of the Wise. When young (however inconsiderate

SERM. X. confiderate and inconfiderable in himfelf) he might be fancied for a pert Stupidity and a fprightly Impertinence; fome bright Sentence in Favour of Infidelity, or Piece of Ridicule in Contempt of Religion, might meet with the Applaufe of his ingenious Acquaintance, who would be apt enough to ftare upon him with a foolifh Face of Praise. But the Gaiety of Youth being gone off, he muft wear out the Remainder of his Days undiftinguifhed and neglected: not daring to be alone; abhorring his own Company; lifelefs and uneafy at the prefent, he has no Pleafure in reflecting upon what is paft, nor in the Profpert of any Thing to come.

If he has an ample Fortune, Riches, it is true, may command an infipid Complaiſance; a formal Homage and ceremonious Professions of Refpect: and teach a fervile World to ſpeak a Language foreign to their Hearts. But where true Merit is wanting, Riches can never procure an affectionate Efteem, an undiſſembled Love, the Tribute which Virtue alone can either expect or deſerve.

Hence it is that Men of this Stamp are continually complaining, that the Times are much altered for the worſe; becauſe the Sprightlineſs of their Youth repreſented every Thing in the moſt engaging Light,
and

and when People are pleased with them- SERM. X.
selves, they are apt to be so with all around
them; the Face of Nature brightens up,
and the Sun shines with a more agreeable
Lustre. But when old Age has cut them
off from the Enjoyments they so much
delighted in, and habitual Vice has given
them a Disrelish of the only true Pleasure,
whose Leaf withers not, and whose Ver-
dure remains in the Winter of our Days;
no Wonder, that a Soul thus distempered,
should view every Object on it's dark
Side: the Change is not in the Times,
but in Themselves, who have been forsaken
by those Gratifications, which they could
not be prevailed with to forsake. How
much otherwise is it with the Virtuous,
who have laid up an inexhaustible Fund of
Pleasures against Old Age! the Current of
whose Virtue still increasing as it runs
along, becomes more strong and vigorous
the nearer it approaches to the Ocean of
Eternity.—But this brings me to shew,

Secondly, How necessarily Those must
be disappointed, who place their Happiness
in any Thing exclusive of Religion and
Virtue.

When we first make our Entrance into
the World, we are too apt to form sanguine
Notions, and gaudy Prospects of Bliss; a
thousand

SERM. X. thousand luxuriant Scenes present themselves to our View. But by that Time we reach the Noon of Life, Experience of the World, frequent Crosses and Disappointments call Home our straggling Thoughts; lower our Notions of Happiness, and reduce them to a just Sense of Things: to what is really attainable in this State; which is at best (for any Length of Time) not true Pleasure, but rather a Freedom from Pain.

And if a Man, at the Close of Life, were to make an impartial Estimate; I doubt he would think his Sufferings more than equivalent to his Enjoyments: he would be unwilling, were the Choice given him, to tread the same Round over, and to measure Life back again.

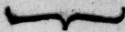
Few will deny this as to the Poor, whose daily Labour serves for little else, but to get their daily Bread, and their daily Bread just refreshes and strengthens them to undergo their daily Labour.

But the Rich, you will say, have much fairer Pretensions to Happiness. Here then we may expect to find it, if any where: And yet They differ from Others more in Shew than Reality; and perhaps their Passions, being more importunate and clamorous in their Demands, in Proportion to the Superiority of their Fortune, may make them
only

only more pompously wretched than the SERM. X.
 Vulgar. Greatness, by making Pleasure
 familiar to them, flattens their Relish for it;
 but gives a keener Edge to every Pain,
 which They must feel as well as Others: it
 dulls their Enjoyments, but points and
 quickens the sense of Anguish and Affronts.
 Indeed they may with Application pursue
 this or that new Pleasure, they may be
 fond for a while of a new Acquisition; but
 when the Gloss of Novelty is once worn
 off, the Transition is very natural from
 Fondness to Indifference, and That becomes
 tasteless and insipid to them, which they
 before so affectionately coveted. The
 Eagerness of Desire being over, we find
 that our Reason was but the Dupe of our
 Imagination, which had painted Things
 bigger than the Life. Hence there is a
 restless Agitation in our Minds, still craving
 something new, still unsatisfied with it
 when possessed. Hence we are continually
 shifting the Scene, expecting That Happiness
 from a Variety of Enjoyments, which We
 cannot find in any One of them. *All the
 Rivers run into the Sea, says the Wise
 Man, yet is the Sea not full:* just so
 though all earthly Pleasures should center
 in One Soul, yet would not that Soul
 be filled and satisfied; because as the Soul
 is a spiritual Being, Nothing but spiritual
 Pleasures can, in Propriety of Speech,

Q

be

SERM. X.  be suitable to it's Nature, and proportioned to it's Grandeur. Hence that great King, after He had travelled through, and curiously surveyed every Region of Pleasure, returned at last to Virtue, the Native Country of the Soul ; in which only she could dwell with Satisfaction.

Here then the Mistake lies ; People in their Enquiries after Happiness place it on improper Objects ; they are looking for it abroad, and have Recourse to a thousand Diversions and Amusements, whilst it is only to be found at Home, in the right Use of Reason ; in Passions well regulated and directed ; in a delightful Self-consciousness in having done all the Good in our Power ; in having employed our Time to the Glory of God, and the Benefit of Mankind.

But if Happiness be the Exercise of our Faculties upon proper Objects, That surely must be the noblest Happiness when our Minds are exercised upon the noblest Objects.

How comes it then, that this great Truth is generally overlooked ; that those especially, who make the Pursuit of Happiness the great Business of their Lives ; that those, who should command a more spacious Prospect by standing upon higher Ground, and enjoying a more commodious Situation in the World, are yet as dead to all Sentiments of Piety as the meanest Peasant, or
most

most illiterate Mechanic? Why, the Drudgery of Business cannot more effectually SERM. X. sink and debase the Mind of the latter; than a constant Circle of gay Follies does that of the former: for even innocent Amusements, when too often repeated, and too much indulged, do as effectually destroy true Piety, as sensual Pleasures themselves; because the Mind, by being fixed on Trifles, is disabled and indisposed for greater and more important Business. These Diversions, however innocent in themselves, may yet, by an Excess of them, become criminal, as they are attended with very bad Consequences; as they destroy all Manliness of Soul, and occasion that Levity of Temper, which exposes us to the Inroads of Temptation, and makes us susceptible of ill Impressions. When Steadiness, the Anchorage of the Soul is once lost, she becomes the Sport of the Passions, and is carried away with every Wind.

From this Fountain, from that amazing Folly of our Great Ones in running after every public Entertainment, how trifling and ridiculous soever it may be, has flowed that fashionable Indifference and Disregard for every Thing that is Serious and Sacred. The Day, which is more immediately set apart for the Service and Worship of God, is generally profaned; and an Habit of

SERM. X. Gaming has extinguished every Sentiment of Devotion. Nor does the Misfortune end here: Inferiors are proud to form themselves upon the Model of their Superiors; and when those, who are bound by all the Ties of Gratitude to that God, *who giveth them all Things richly to enjoy*, to advance the Interests of Religion, and to enlarge it's Empire, stamp a Credit upon Vice and Irreligion; by this Means a Gate is opened to all Manner of Profaneness: Men commonly thinking it some Excuse for their Crimes, if they can plead the Example of their Betters in Favour of them.

What then? will some One say; is this your Way to Happiness? Must we bid Adieu to all Diversions?—By no Means—I would not be understood to decry Amusements in general; I only condemn them, when they take up too much of our Time, and interfere with nobler Pursuits. For certainly We were not placed in this World, like the *Leviathan* in the Deep, only *to take our Pastime therein*. There are Duties to be performed by Us; and, as a Motive to our Obedience, the great Lawgiver has made these Duties and our Happiness consistent with each other: they go Hand in Hand, and the Pleasure which results from Virtue is sufficient Recommendation of it to our Practice. Who ever relieved the
Indigent

Indigent without feeling within himself the SERM. X. greatest Complacency and Satisfaction? 
Compare the Pleasures of Sobriety and Temperance with those of Rioting and Excess; the sweet Sleep of Labour and Industry with the broken and disturbed Slumbers of Idleness and Luxury, and Reason will soon convince you which deserves to have the Preference.

We may therefore lay it down as a Maxim of undoubted Truth, that none is a greater *Epicure* than the true, sincere *Christian*; none are greater *Self-deniers* than the abandoned in Pleasure; as they cut themselves off from the most valuable Enjoyments; as they contract a Littleness of Soul, and a Disrelish and Insensibility to every generous Sentiment of Humanity and Goodness; as they must be obliged to a thousand Trifles to fill up the mighty Void of Thought, to shut out that importunate Intruder Self-reflection, and to keep off that Sullenness, which must come upon a Mind conscious of no intrinsic Worth; and when some Years, each more flat and insipid than another, are thus spent, they have no Reason to value this Life, but merely because they are afraid of a future.

The Conclusion of all is, Happiness consists in our placing it upon true and

SERM. X. proper Objects. We have seen, that *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*, cannot secure it to Us. Let us therefore seek for it, where it is only to be found, in the Practice of Virtue and Religion. And *pure and undefiled Religion is this*, to relieve the Distressed, to have an universal Charity for all Men, and to keep ourselves *unspotted from the World*.

SERMON XI.

Of Anger, Meekness, &c.

EPHES. iv. 26.

Be ye angry, and sin not.

HOWEVER unequal the Dispensation SERM. XI.
of Providence, upon a careless and
transient View, may seem to be; yet, upon
a more close and accurate Survey, we shall
find a greater Equality therein than we
were aware of. Thus, for Instance, the
Men in whose Composition Fire and
Spirit are the predominant Ingredients,
have generally much nobler Designs, and
are capable of greater Attainments, than
those of a phlegmatic and more dispassionate
Make. But then the same Life and
Energy, which pushes on the *former* to
undertake generous and heroic Actions,
often precipitates them into fatal Excesses.
If they are *more* than the common Run of
Men in *some* Respects; Providence, to
humble them and reduce them to a Level

Q 4

with

S E R M. with their Fellow-Creatures, has left
 XI. them in Danger of being *less* than Men
 in *others*. When they do well, No-body
 better; and when ill, Nobody worse.
 Whereas the Men of cooler and more
 Saturnine Constitutions resemble the colder
 Countries; which, though they are not
 productive of those generous Fruits and
 rich Metals that ennoble the hotter Cli-
 mates, are yet free from several noxious and
 baneful Animals wherewith the other
 abound. The Affections in These are gentle
 Ferments working in the Breast, which hin-
 der it from settling into Inactivity, but do
 not transport it into Exorbitances and in-
 temperate Heats. They can more easily
 observe the Apostle's Precept, *Be ye angry,*
and sin not.

Since the Scripture every-where not
 only condemns the grosser Acts of Vice, but
 forbids the least Approach or Tendency to
 it; the Apostle's Meaning cannot be this:
 "Indulge yourselves in Anger, provided
 "you sin not." No; we must not go to
 the utmost Verge of what we call *lawful*
 Anger, lest we be unawares betrayed into
 what is *not* so. Thin Partitions divide the
 Frontiers between what is *merely innocent*
 and what is *unlawful*; and the Transition
 from the one to the other is almost insen-
 sible, and therefore almost unavoidable.
 He that escapeth Danger is a *fortunate*
 2 Man;

Man ; but He that does not wantonly throw himself into it is a *wise* Man. After we have once given the Reins to our *Passion*, it becomes an unequal Task to stop it where we please ; it is in vain to say, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther*. The much wiser Expedient is to shorten the Line of our Liberty, and to watch the first Emotions of Anger. St. Paul's Meaning I therefore take to be this ; “ If you should “ happen to be angry, take Care that you “ do not sin.”

S E R M.
XI.

There are some who put so *strict* an Interpretation on this Text as supposes us to *sin* if we are *angry at all* ; and consequently that *Anger* is *in itself sinful*. But this is straining the Words to a Sense which is neither easy nor natural ; which is not countenanced from other plain Parts of Scripture ; and which cannot be justified on the Principles of Morality. For *Anger* is one of the *Passions*, and of the same essential Kind with the others that are implanted in our natural Frame. Now, tho' God in the Beginning made Man *upright*, and free from any Incurfion of irregular Passions ; yet He must have foreseen the Defects and Frailties that our Nature would become subject to by the original Transgression ; and foreseeing would not, we may safely say, suffer any Thing absolutely and *in itself* sinful or evil to remain in the essential

S E R M.
XI.

essential Constitution of our Nature. On the contrary, the *Passions* seem to be the *material Subject* out of which all our moral Virtue is formed. The Sum of our moral Duty consists in bringing them to, and preserving them in, a true Balance. To endeavour therefore to root them out of the human Composition, in order to render the Operations of our Reason more perfect and easy; would be just as rational a Project, as it would be to destroy all the Subjects of a Prince in order to render his Government the more complete and absolute. In a Word; the true and just Character of *Man* is not to be without Passions, but to bring them all to a proper Temper.

The *Passions*, it is true, without Reason to prescribe and moderate their Motions, would, like the common Men in an Army, make but wild and disorderly Work? and therefore after their first Rising they ought not to stir one Step without regular Orders: but under a prudent Conduct it will be found, that the Interest of moral Virtue will be greatly promoted by their Force and Activity. It is not the bare *Apprehension* of what is *Right* that determines us to act with Vigour and Resolution in the Pursuit of it; nor is it the bare *Discernment* of what is *Wrong* that creates in us a sufficient Aversion to it. No: our Perception and Judgment, in both Cases, must be reinforced

forced by some more active and alarming Principles ; in the former Case like Spurs to *incite*, in the latter like Bits to *restrain*: and these different Offices do our different Passions respectively undertake, and effectually execute.

S E R M.
XI.

Since then the *simple* Act or Exercise of the Passions is in itself *indifferent*, and becomes either *good*, or *otherwise*, by the Circumstance of the Object to which it is directed, the End it designs, and the Degree of Temper wherewith it pursues that End; I propose in the following Discourse to shew,

Ist, In what Cases our *Anger* may be *innocently* indulged.

IIdly, When it becomes *intemperate* and *unlawful*.

IIIIdly, As a *general* Motive to restrain us from *intemperate* Anger, I will consider the Nature of it's opposite Virtue, *Meekness*. And,

Lastly, Subjoin some more *special* Considerations for the same Purpose.

First then, I am to shew in what Cases our *Anger* may be *innocently* indulged.

And

S E R M.
X I.

And here, that we may be able to form a more exact Judgment of the particular Cases I shall mention, it will be proper to apprise ourselves of the true Idea of *Anger*: which is defined, “ a Displeasure of the Mind arising from the Apprehension of Injury, together with a Desire of removing it.” *Injury* must here be distinguished from *Natural Evil*, which may be brought upon us either by Men *undesignedly*, by Brute-Creatures, or even by Things inanimate; but *Injury* is *Evil* with *Design*, and therefore of a *moral* Consideration.

Again, the *Desire of removing Injury*, or the *Vindication of ourselves from Injury*, must be distinguished from *Revenge*: the latter supposes a Return of *Injury*, and nothing but a Return of *Injury*; but the former, though it may design bringing *Evil*, or *Punishment* on the Injurious Person, yet it designs it not as it is *Evil*, but as it is *Good*: that is, that it may tend to, and procure, his Amendment and Reformation: and therefore such a Return is not *Revenge*.

From these Things thus premised, it will not be difficult to comprehend, that our Anger may be innocently indulged.

1. On the Approach of any injurious Aggressor threatening our Destruction, or using any Act of Violence that may endanger our Safety—Here the first Motions of our Anger spring from the Principle of Self-

Self-Preservation : and are so sudden and impetuous as often to prevent Deliberation: they are, in Truth, common to us with Children and the very Brutes ; and therefore the Actions, immediately consequent upon and produced by them, come rather under a *natural* than a *moral* Denomination. An additional Proof however, that *Anger* in *itself* is not *sinful*. But still, on the most mature Deliberation, we must be justified in consulting our own Security, according to the Degrees of the impending Danger ; and in Cases of extreme Necessity, that is, where no other possible Means can be contrived for our Preservation, we may repel Force by Force, and bring that Destruction on the Head of our Enemy which otherwise He would have brought upon Our's. Nor can this properly be called *Revenge* ; for our principle Design *here* is, not to inflict a *deserved Injury*, but, to guard against an *Injury undeserved* ; and we *would have chosen* His Safety, had it been consistent with our *own*, without proceeding to this fatal Extremity.

And here, considering the daring and desperate Tempers of many wicked Men ; the weak Impressions they feel of any religious Principle, or Sentiment of Humanity ; the small Dread they have of the extremest Punishment that human Laws can inflict ; and the many Opportunities they may find
of

S E R M.
XI.

of Secrecy to execute their villainous Purposes ; we cannot but admire the good Providence of God, and be thankful to Him *whose Mercies are over all his Works*, that so few of us, in Comparison, are ever brought into these great Dangers. *The Wicked watched against the Righteous, and seeketh Occasion to slay him : The Lord will not let him come into his Hand.*——But to return.

2. How far soever the harsh Gratings of *Anger* may seem to be removed from the soft Motions of *Benevolence* ; yet *these* sometimes, as Oil does to Steel, give an Edge to our Resentment ; where it will be found not only *innocent* and *excusable*, but even *commendable* and *generous*. How are we affected with an Historical Relation, a Theatrical Representation, or even a Poetical and feigned Description of Villainy under the Disguise of Friendship ; helpless Innocence betrayed, dishonoured, or oppressed ; merciless Cruelty inflicted, and the like ? Our *Heart burns within us*, full of Resentment and Indignation ; and our Tears force their Way. These Movements are deep-grounded in our Nature, and therefore irresistible : and if such be their Force in the Case of *Fiction*, or bare *Narration*, we cannot suppose it either is, or ought to be, diminished by *Reality* : and if they carry us so far in Behalf of *Others*, they must be allowed

allowed at least an equal Scope and Liberty S E R M.
in Behalf of *Ourselves*. XI.

Hence it appears, that *Benevolence, disinterested Benevolence*, presides in human Nature; and unites Mankind into a Society so intimate; that, however distant the several Members may be, one common Sensation, as it were, runs through the whole. And as in the Natural System of the World there are some *repelling* Qualities, which yet must conspire to aid the grand Power of *Attraction*; so even those Passions which, considered in a simple View, have but an unfriendly and *unsociable* Aspect, are yet, in their general Comprehension, aiding and assisting to preserve inviolable the *Bonds* of the great Community.

3. Our Anger is apt to kindle at the Apprehension of a Slight, or an Affront; a Contempt or Reproach thrown upon us: on which Occasions, if the Apprehension be well-grounded, our Resentment, to a certain Degree, must be allowed to be *excuseable*; and so not *sinful*. Our Tame-ness in these Instances would be construed into Stupidity, and be treated as such, by the pert and petulant. Peace and Honesty, and the Reputation of Honesty, are the greatest worldly Possessions that many Men have, or desire to have; and the Invaders of them, especially They who take a Pleasure in, or make a Sport of, depriving others
of

S E R M.
X I.

of the Enjoyment of them by an unmannerly Behaviour, rude Insults, or provoking Language; may be, and ought to be treated with such Marks of Disapprobation and Displeasure, as may be a sufficient Guard for us against the Assaults of these Trespassers: nay, I do not know but a greater Indulgence may be allowed to our Resentment on these Occasions, where Human Laws have not allowed us the Privilege of their Assistance and Protection.

But it may be inquired, How is the *Lawfulness* of Anger, in *all* or *any* of the foregoing Instances, consistent with the Command given by our Saviour, *not to resist Evil*: but to subdue our Nature to such a Degree of Passiveness, as, if *any one should smite us on the Right Cheek, to turn to him the other also?*

I answer, these Words admit of an Interpretation very consistent with What has been advanced in Defence of *lawful* Anger. The Law of *Retaliation* was here the Subject of our Saviour's Discourse, which either in it's original Intention *did*, or rather perhaps by the corrupt Glosses of the *Jewish* Doctors was *made* to signify a Repaying in *Kind* every bodily Injury a Man received; *an Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth.* *Accidental* and *undesigned* Injuries were excepted out of this Law; and therefore we must consider the Injuries included in it to be

be *Injuries* strictly speaking: that is, accompanied with *Malice* and *Hatred*. Accord-
 SERM.
 XI.
 ingly, the Temper of the Aggressor, in the Instance before us, is apparently *malicious*; and this Temper Our Saviour condemns to such a Degree, as to command us rather to submit to such malicious Treatment *doubly*, than return it *once*. The greatest Indignities a Christian can suffer will not justify in him a Spirit of Malice and Revenge. *He is to recompense no Man Evil for Evil* — But there is a very distinct Medium between *this*, and consulting *no Methods* at all for his Redress even of the smallest Injuries; and that is, by endeavouring to obtain such Redress by innocent Means; which are plainly these; that, in bringing the Offender to Punishment, or to a Sense of his Miscarriage, we take Care the Degrees of our Resentment do not exceed the Nature of the Offence; and that we have a Regard, not only to our *own* Good, but to *that* of the Public, and even to *that* of the Offender himself; without being acted by the least Mixture of Malice. And thus it is that a Parent resents and punishes Disobedience, or other Misbehaviour, in his Child; and yet retains for him at the same Time the highest Degrees of Benevolence.

4. We may not only be *angry* without *sinning*, in the Instances alledged; as we sometimes may *sin* in *not* being angry. God,

R

who

S P R M.
X I.

who designed Human Society, designed the Good of it; and That Good to be promoted by every Individual to the utmost of his Power. Hereby there is tacitly committed to every Man a Kind of Trust and Guardianship of Virtue, whose Rights he is obliged to support and maintain in Proportion to his Abilities; not only by Example, by Advice and Exhortation; but even by Reproof and Resentment, suitable to the Circumstances of the Offender and the Offence. Whoever, therefore, can bring himself to a careless and cold Indifferency, or calm Unconcernedness in hearing any profane or impious Discourse, or in beholding any cruel, outrageous, or oppressive Action, becomes in some Measure an Encourager and Abettor of them: and makes himself *accountable* for them in Proportion to his Power of preventing them. And consequently, They who obtain any Degree of Superiority (whether *natural*, as that of Parents, or *civil*, as that of Magistrates and Governors) are still under more weighty Obligations, not only to note and censure, but even to check and chastise the Irregularities, the Faults and Vices of those under their immediate Care and Inspection. Their Authority is an additional Ground for their Resentment; and their Resentment will greatly enforce their Authority. Anger manifests itself in so many awful Forms, as never fail of affecting

ing the Imagination, and leaving sometimes S E R M.
 very memorable Impressions. When the X I.
 Children of *Israel* were guilty of a gross
 Act of Idolatry, in worshipping the Golden
 Calf, we read that *Moses's Anger was ex-*
ceeding hot, and he brake the Tables of the
Covenant. It has been remarked, that *Moses*
 did not break the Tables till he approached
 near the Camp, that he might the better
 testify his Resentment against, and make
 those Idolaters more sensible of, their great
 Wickedness. And lest this Example of *Moses*
 should be thought insufficient for authoriz-
 ing our Practice; we have the Example of
 a *greater than Moses* to justify and encour-
 age it, which is that of our Saviour Him-
 self, who was *so grieved with the Pharisees*
for the Hardness of their Heart, that he
looked about on them with Anger. This is a
 sufficient Warrant for allowing Anger and
 Resentment a Place in our reprov-
 ing the Vices of Children, Servants or others placed
 in any Degree of Subjection to us: the
 Danger often lies in the contrary Excess;
 too great Lenity and Forbearance. How
 great a Guilt is hereby incurred will best
 appear by the Severity of its Punishment in
Eli the High-Priest of *Israel*, and at the
 same Time a supreme *Magistrate* and a
Father. Let every Father hear, and those
 who are guilty tremble, at the Denunciation
 of God's Judgment, which was afterwards

S E R M.

X I.

punctually fulfilled—*And the Lord said—
I will perform against Eli all Things which
I have spoken concerning his House—I will
judge his House for ever, for the Iniquity
which he knoweth: because his Sons made
themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*
As Eli was otherwise a strictly religious
and good Man; *We* should have been weak
enough to think, that Forgiveness might
have been extended to a single Failing, a
Failing of this Sort, in a Father, a very
old Father: no, it was a Sin that *was not
to be purged away with Sacrifice nor Offering
for ever.*

But forasmuch as the Occasions of exer-
cising *lawful* Anger are but few; and Re-
sentment does not want so often, or so much
to be excited where it may be *proper*, as to
be curbed and restrained where it is *not so*:
let us consider,

Illy, When our *Anger* becomes *intem-
perate* and *unlawful*. And it is undeniably
so,

1. When it breaks out into *outrageous
Actions*: for then, like a boisterous Wind,
it quite puts out that Light which should
guide our Feet in the Way of Peace: it de-
thrones Reason, and suspends its Exercise.
An Extravagance of this Kind is the more
dangerous, and therefore the more sinful,
because, though the Impulse of Passion
should

should meet with no Opposition to inflame S E R M.
 it, which however is generally the Case; X I.
 yet when it has worked the Blood into so
 violent a Ferment, it is apt of itself to re-
 double its Force. And no one can tell
 what Fury, wound up to the highest Pitch,
 may produce. A Man is now become the
 Instrument of his own Passion, and may
 be made to act such Tragedies, as he could
 not think of before without Horror. Great
 Reason therefore have we to implore the
 Grace of God, that we be not led so far
 into this Temptation. The Man that, an
 Hour before, seemed to be guided by a
 sober Sense of Religion, is now got beyond
 the Line of Reason, and is seen to break
 through all the Restraints of Decency, Hu-
 manity and Virtue to satiate his Vengeance
 in the Blood of his Fellow-Creatures. A
passionate Man is every Moment liable to
 do that which he may ever after repent:
 like the *Horse rushing into the Battle*, and
 by a savage and fierce Instinct bearing down
 all before him; but receiving Wounds the
 Pains whereof will ever after be felt. For
 the Pleasure which arises from the gratify-
 ing this Passion is but momentary: it is
 like the Lightning that gilds the Storm, a
 Flash of Joy, and then all again is overcast,
 gloomy and frightful.

2. Anger becomes *unlawful* when it
 vents itself in unseemly and reviling Lan-

R 2

guage.

SERM.
XI.

guage. It were to be wished that Those, who have such a peculiar Delicacy of Feeling when they are affronted, would abstain from all Appearance of an affrontive and disrespectful Behaviour to others : that They who are so quick to *receive*, would be as slow to *give*, an Affront. On the contrary, it often happens, that they only feel for themselves ; They are not the least sensible of the Indignities offered to others. How frequently do those, who are highly enraged, pass a general and undistinguishing Censure upon a Man's Character ? They allow nothing commendable in it. Contrary to the Rules of candid Artists, whatever is beautiful, is either overlooked, or thrown into Shades ; whatever is deformed, is exaggerated, heightened, and exposed in the fullest Light. And on this View they pronounce Judgment, and *shoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words* : little regarding how deep they wound ; though frequently, like poisoned Arrows, the Wounds they give are incurable.

Some indeed are too apt to *excuse* themselves, and express their *Hopes*, and *imagine*, that God will *forgive* them ; because they pretend, they are borne away into such extravagant Licences by a sudden Discomposure of Mind, which quite transported them beyond themselves. And it must be allowed, that sometimes He, who has Virtue
very

very much at Heart, may, on a sudden S E R M. XI.
 Surprize of Passion, be tempted to *Speak*
unadvisedly with his Lips. But it happens
 but too frequently, that those who put in
 this Plea, have no Claim to it. For what
 if this Passion, which they pretend to be a
Frailty, prove really a *Fault*? And in
 general it will be found, that haughty,
opprobrious Language is not so much owing
 to a Man's *sudden* Temptations to Anger as
 to an inward *standing Habit* of Contempt,
 which that *occasional* Temptation, by
 throwing Him off his Guard, manifested
 and exposed to View. A secret, unsuspected
Pride then, the settled Temper of our
 Minds, may be the *original* Cause of
 disdainful and contemptuous Expressions,
 and a Surprize of *Passion* only the *Occasion*
 of discovering that Temper by such Ex-
 pressions.

In vain therefore do such Persons seek
 to screen themselves from Guilt, by resting
 the Occasion of it on the ungoverned Bursts,
 or unguarded Sallies of *Passion*; since they
 habitually encourage *another* ill Affection
 of the Mind, which is sure to set their
Passion at Work. As well may the Intem-
 perate complain, that they cannot secure
 themselves against the Attacks of many
 Distempers from the Weakness of their
 Constitution, when their *Intemperance* has

S E R M.
X I.

been the true Occasion of that *Weakness*.
But,

3dly, We are not always to judge of the *Sinfulness of Anger* from the open and undisguised Appearance of it, either in our *Words* or *Actions*: it may be concealed and treasured up in our *Thoughts*, and yet retain as much *Malignity* as when it immediately breaks out and discovers itself in *contumelious Language*, or *Acts of Violence*. For, by brooding in the Mind, it becomes the Parent of a very untoward Issue, *Malice* and *Hatred*.

Malice is a cool and deliberate Resentment; but sometimes more keen and malevolent than that which is rash and precipitate. It is like a massy Stone, slowly raised; but threatening the greater Danger to Him on whom it shall fall. Many, I question not, are apt to sooth themselves with the deceitful Thought, that they are Men of *Temper* and *Patience*, because, on very great Provocations, they can so far smother and suppress the first Impulse of Passion, as not to betray any strong Symptoms of it: when all the while their *Coolness* is owing to nothing better than their *Cowardice*. The Veil that is flung over their Fury does not alter it's real Complexion, it only enables it to act with less Suspicion, and therefore with greater Security at a more proper Opportunity.

nity. The Heat of Anger thus concealed then, may be as injurious as that which immediately discharges itself, and evaporates in a sudden Flame: but the Guilt of the *Malicious* is aggravated in this, that he acts with more Deliberation than those of a *hot* and *fiery* Temper. He has Time to debate the Matter coolly with Himself; to call in the Counsels of Reason and Prudence; and to sue for the Succours of Grace. All this he may do, and ought to do: And if either through a wilful Omission of this, or in Spite of all the Remonstrances of Reason and Conscience, He still perseveres in the determined Resolution of executing His wicked Purposes; His Sin, thus heightened with every Circumstance of Presumption, becomes exceeding sinful,

But farther, Anger is yet *sinful* when encouraged in our *Thoughts* to the Degree of *Hatred*. For though our Resentment, in this View, may not run so high as to suggest any evil Designs of *injuring* a Man in His Person or Property; or though it should spare, what it very seldom spares, His Reputation; yet still it is apt to cherish an *evil Disposition* towards Him. It inclines us to rejoice at the Misfortunes that befall Him; or at least to be unconcerned for them: it restrains many Acts of our Benevolence towards Him, when it would be equally our own Interest to perform

SERM.
XI.

S E R M.
XI.

perform them : nay it may turn away our Eyes from Him in the Day of His extreme Adversity and Affliction.

Now it is certain, there is no Man, who retains the least Sense of Humanity, but *wishes* to live in a good Understanding with all Mankind; abstracting from every Consideration, but the pleasing Reflection that naturally arises in the Mind from such a Situation. The Reason of this we need not inquire at present : it is enough that every Man feels this social Desire so strong in His own Heart. Why then will any One chuse to practise such a strange Sort of Self-Denial as to rob His own Breast of such pleasurable Emotions, for no Reason but to rob His Fellow-Creatures of the same ? This is not only hindering Good, or what amounts to the same, doing Evil, for Evil's Sake, (the Temper of the most accursed Spirit) it is yet worse ; it is doing Evil to ourselves for the Sake of doing Evil to others. But, " Is it not a *Pleasure* " to us when we *rejoice* at the Misfortunes " of Others ; and therefore are we not still " in the Possession of *Pleasure* ? " A Pleasure it is, but a Pleasure arising from *Passion* only : a Pleasure that will not endure the Test of *Reason*, or the Survey of *Reflection* : and therefore an unnatural, brutish, and savage Pleasure : All which is evident from this, that when Time has in

Part

Part obliterated, and at last totally effaced, SERM.
XI. the deformed Image of Hatred ; we find a thorough Complacency and Satisfaction at the Retreat and final Farewel of so unwelcome a Guest. And this is still farther confirmed from the Joy that arises on the Reconciliation of Persons at Variance. What tumultuous Transports, think we, must have filled the Hearts of *Jacob* and *Esau* at their first Interview ; when the Current of Brotherly Love had been so long interrupted between them ? Take the Account of it in the inimitable Simplicity of Scriptural Language : *And JACOB lifted up His Eyes, and looked, and behold ESAU came, and JACOB—bowed Himself to the Ground seven Times, until He came near to His Brother : and ESAU ran to meet Him, and embraced Him, and fell on His Neck, and kissed Him ; and they wept.*

Were ever Revenge, Malice, or Hatred accompanied with such grateful Sensations, such kindly Overflowings of Joy and Gladness in the Heart ? No : *Benevolence*, on such Occurrences, asserts the Right of supreme Dominion in the Human Constitution, and triumphs over all the Tribe of the *unsocial* Affections. We are convinced of our Folly in revolting from Her gentle Sway to be enslaved by Tyrants, and terrified by Monsters. This Conviction *turns* our Hearts ; which again are *softened* by a

SERM.

XI.

Mixture of Shame and Repentance for our Fault: and now, Joy pouring in upon them, the Joy of being restored to the peaceful Possession of ourselves, and replaced in the Affection of our Friends, excites those distressful, yet pleasing Agonies, which seek for Relief in the like distressful and pleasing Flow of our Tears.

Do Men ever take Delight in being Witnesses of the Quarrels, Animosities, and Heart-Burnings among either Friends or Enemies? But, on such Occasions as these, when Tears testify the Sincerity of mutual Affection of Hearts reconciled and united; who can so far restrain his Joy, as not to *rejoice with those that do rejoice*; and, at the same Time, to *weep with those that weep*?

Thus we find, whenever our Anger rises so high as to stop, or drive back, the Streams of Benevolence; it throws us into an uneasy, violent and convulsive State. And hence it appears, that the Command of *loving our Enemies*, which has been thought *a hard Saying*, and impossible to be fulfilled, is really no more, when resolved into it's first Principles, than bidding us *be at Peace with ourselves*; which we cannot be, so long as we continue at Enmity with others. The Command is not less agreeable to the true Spirit of *Morality*,
than

than it is to that Love and Charity, which S E R M.
breathes through all the Gospel. XI.

And in Conformity to this, and the View that we have taken of the *general Cases of sinful Anger*; let me apply the Words of the Apostle, exhibiting the natural Gradations of it: *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice*—As a *general Motive* to which I proceed, as I proposed in the

III. Third Place, to consider it's opposite Virtue, *Meekness*.

This was a Virtue which our Blessed Saviour was pleased in an especial Manner to recommend in his own Example: *Learn of ME, for I am meek and lowly in Heart*. The Characters of Persons are generally strongly marked in Scripture; and though two Men are described as having the same Quality; yet it is diversified as to some Particulars in each. It has some distinguishing Features which shew it to be *that Man's*, and not another's. There is not a more remarkable Instance of this, than the Difference of Behaviour in our *Saviour* and *St. Paul* under the same Treatment. Both of them were struck in a Court of Judicature: but the one of them replies, *If I have done Evil, bear Witness of the Evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* The other

SERM. other—God shall smite thee, thou whited
 XI. Wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the
 Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law? Both of them speak in

Character: our Saviour, with that well-governed Spirit, and gentle Wisdom, which kept him at the utmost Distance from unruly Passion: The Apostle, with that animated and spirited Wisdom, which though it did not suffer him to say any Thing, but what such an extraordinary Provocation warranted; or to be transported into unlawful Anger; yet he stood on the very Confines of what *was so*. In a Word, the Conduct of our Saviour presents us with a Pattern, an unallayed Pattern of *Meekness*: That of the Apostle seems not quite free from a certain Tincture of human Frailty.

Meekness is, as *Aristotle* long ago defined it, a due Mean between Tameness and Stupidity on the one Hand, and Rage and Fury on the other. It is not absolute Freedom from Passion, but such a Command over it as to prevent our being transported beyond the Bounds of Humanity and good Sense. It is this Virtue which, if it does not give a Man such a glaring and shining Figure as some other good Qualities; yet constitutes the most lovely, beautiful, and agreeable Character, and gains unenvied Praise. If it does not draw the Eyes of the World so much upon it's Possessor,
 and

and attract our Admiration as some other Accomplishments, yet nothing endears us more to the Affection of Mankind than the *Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit.*

SERM.

XI.

But, to be more particular, let us take a View of this Virtue in it's peculiar Symptoms and Characters. And,

1st, A Meek Man will have Sense enough to know when he is injured, and Spirit enough to resent it: but then he will consider whether he can do more Good by openly resenting an Offence and punishing the Offender, than by overlooking it and passing it by. It is a Rule with him, never to say or do any unkind Thing except when there is some Necessity for it; either with Regard to himself, or the Public. And the Reason is as follows: where there is no Reason for Severity, when no valuable and desirable End can be compassed thereby, there is always a Reason against it;—"it is an unnecessary and useless Severity." Nay, he cannot even *see* a Person in Pain, though he does not give it, without *feeling*, in some Measure, what he *sees*.

As soon as any Affront is offered, it is the Language of Passion — "Such an Indignity is not to be borne — Such an Offence is intolerable — it would be Tameness not to punish it." But if calm Reason

SERM.

XI.

Reason might put in it's Plea; it would say—"What Benefit do you propose to Yourself?—Do you take vindictive Measures merely to gratify Your exorbitant Passion, a turbulent Incendiary in your Breast; which is a greater Enemy to your Peace than any You have? Or is it your Intention to reform the injurious Person; to promote the Welfare of Society and Your own?"

2dly, A Man of a meek Temper will distinguish between a Man's general *standing* Sentiments, when he is perfectly calm and undisturbed; and his *occasional* Sentiments, when his Spirits are ruffled and over-heated. He will consider what he is for a *Constancy* towards him, and what he may be now and then when some cross Accident may have soured his Temper; or some Passion clouded and disturbed his Reason. And such a Consideration is absolutely necessary to preserve Friendship, and to keep up Peace and Harmony among those that live constantly, or converse often, together. No Union could be lasting if every Thing that was occasionally let fall should be gathered up and circulated with the Additions which are generally made by officious, and sometimes malicious, Intermeddlers. Unkindly Thoughts, which vent themselves in unfriendly Expressions, may be only occasional Visitors; which tarry but

but an Hour; whereas tender and endearing Sentiments of us may be the constant and welcome Inhabitants of the Mind. A meek Man will never break off any Intimacy with a Friend upon the Account of some angry Reflexions unfuitable to his general, habitual Way of Thinking; he will consider, it is impossible to maintain a friendly Intercourse without making Allowances for such Infirmities. And He who says or thinks he has discharged every Duty, without any Failure, in Point of Kindness and Friendliness to his Domestics and near Neighbours; has forgot one Duty in Respect of himself—*that* of Self-Examination; for the least Recollection will serve to shew, that he has sometimes, to Persons near him or about him, said or done Things, that had better have been left unsaid or undone: and has omitted to do kind Things, which ought to have been done——that he has been out of Humour sometimes when there *was not* sufficient Reason to be so, and has gone too far when there *was*. A man of a gentle Nature will therefore make proper Abatements; and be inclined to think that, as a generous Enemy may sometimes, through a Flush of good Humour, and an extraordinary Flow of Spirits, say a handsome Thing in our Behalf, and deviate into Praise; so a firm Friend, through a Surprize of Ill-Humour, may put on

S an

S E R M. an angry Look, or drop a disobliging
 XI. Expression.

And whereas a hasty Temper is immediately for proceeding to Extremities; a meek Temper goes more leisurely to Work, and consults the softest Seasons of Address to advise with a Man: *perhaps he has not said it; and, if he have, that he say it no more.* And indeed without such a Procedure, all Friendships would be precarious; they would lye at the Mercy of every one that was malicious enough to do us an ill Office.

3dly, A Meek Man will never be angry with a Person for telling him what He imagines to be a Fault in him, provided it be done in a private Manner, and the Advice be conveyed in the most palatable Vehicle. For should the Fault be purely imaginary, and the Censure wrong-directed, yet no Harm is done, and he will be obliged to his friendly Adviser for his good Intentions: But if the Censure should fall in the right Place, he will be doubly obliged to him, both for his good Intentions, and for the real Good he hath done him, by shewing him to himself, and putting it in his Power to make himself better by correcting his Mistakes.

When a Friend gives us to understand, that he has our Interest at Heart, this opens all the Avenues to our Mind; strengthens
 and

and enforces his Admonitions; so that they S E R M O
X I. never fail to make deeper Impressions upon us, than the most masterly Strokes of a Book of Morality. We consider the *Author* as influenced by a Motive of doing Good in General; whereas the Friend is actuated by a Concern for us in Particular; and this gives a considerable Weight to his Advice. They who speak affectionately and sincerely from their own Hearts, generally speak affectionately and powerfully to the Hearts of *others*. And the plain Language of an open Heart, a frank and undesigning Breast, sooner stamps Conviction upon the Mind, than the well-turned Periods and artificial Ornaments of the finest Orator that ever lived.

4thly, A Man of a meek Spirit is glad to be reconciled to the Person who has offended or injured him; and therefore is ready to hearken to all Overtures of Accommodation. When he who hath made himself an Adversary comes and accosts him with the Salutation of *Jehu* to *Jonadab*; *Is thy Heart right, as my Heart is with thy Heart? if it be, give me thy Hand*: He answers with *Jonadab*, *It is*: and gives him his Hand. He receives him with open Arms, as a Friend returning from a strange Country. Indeed when a Man sits in Judgment on a Cause between himself and us, and gives Sentence in our Favour; what can we desire more? The

S E R M.
XI.

Offence was the Effect of *Passion*, the Acknowledgment the Result of *Reason*. To appease *our* *Passion* he has made a Sacrifice of his *own*—and shall we not accept the Offering, but sacrifice our Reason, and even our Humanity, to our *Passion*? Such an humble Demeanour, one would think, should bring down even the *high Looks of the Proud*: because he finds his Adversary has done, what He himself thinks the most difficult of all Things to be done; he has divested himself of *Pride*. A Meek Man, however, on such Occasions will call to Mind the Command of our Saviour; *If thy Brother trespass against Thee seven Times in a Day, and seven Times in a Day return unto Thee, saying, I repent; Forgive Him.* A Command that carries with it two Suppositions, either of them sufficient to subdue the most stubborn and unrelenting Heart: *If thy Brother trespass against Thee seven Times in a Day*—A sad Intimation of the hourly Infirmities which Human Nature is liable to! an Object of our Pity, though we were not *in the same Condemnation*: but as we are, and as he is our *Brother*; the Sense of Pity ought to strike the deeper. And moreover, *if he turn unto Thee*—if conscious of his Fault he comes to us as if we were in God's Stead, professes his Repentance, and beseeches our Pardon; we should be almost ashamed of accepting

accepting such Condescension and Sub-^{S E R M. XI.}mission; and be sorry that we did not prevent this humble Application, by a voluntary Tender of Forgiveness: Forgiveness? — Alas! what can we forgive? His *Sin*? Human Pride has not yet pretended to assume that Power; and human Piety will pray God to forgive it: and it may be, God has forgiven it on our Brother's Repentance. But his *Punishment*? — Man, sinful Man, is ready and willing to think himself a proper Object of *God's Mercy*: and yet can hardly bear to think a Man, less sinful than himself, the Object of his *own*.

In few Words; a *Meek* Man will shew such an Inclination and Readiness to forgive the Offences of Others, as if He had perpetual Need of the same Indulgence: but will so carefully avoid giving the least Offence, as if, it might be thought, He would forgive No-body.

If the View we have taken of this peaceable, gentle and amiable Virtue has not made Impression sufficient to mortify us against the *Excessive* Degrees of *Anger*; let us,

Lastly, Call in to our farther Assistance some more *direct* and *particular* Considerations. And,

1st, It is very weakly objected by some, that it is not in their Power to withstand and quell the outrageous Assaults of *Passion*.

SERM.
XI.

This may be very true, if they have taken no Pains for that Purpose. Our Passions are naturally of the unruly Kind; and, in order to bring them under due Command, much Labour, and not less Skill and Management, are required. And it would not be amiss, perhaps, if a Man were to prescribe a particular Course of Discipline over each of them in their Turn: during which Time, besides a general Regard, they should demand his especial and most particular Care. This seems to have been the Method of a Renowned Emperor; Renowned, not more for His admirable Government of the *Roman* Empire, than for the equally admirable Government of Himself. And if the Order of his *Meditations* was guided by that of his *Practice*: it is pertinent to remark, that * He began his Home-Regulation by *acquiring a Gentleness of Behaviour, and a Freedom from Passion.*

Now, if nothing of this Kind hath been attempted by those who are so ready to complain of their Infirmities, as if they took a secret Satisfaction in them; all that we can collect from their Complaint is, that, in Effect, *they charge God foolishly*; they charge That on His Workmanship, which is owing to their own gross Negligence.

* Παρὰ τὸ πάντες τὸ καλόντες, καὶ ἀόργητον. ΜΑΡΚ.
ΑΝΤΩΝ. Βιβλ. α'. §. I.

But notwithstanding all this, it is almost impossible for them not to recollect some Occasions, when, upon the Foresight and Expectation of some quarrelsome and litigious Interview, they have resolved to be upon their Guard; and, by such Resolution, have foreclosed and dammed up every Inlet of extravagant Passion. They must recollect likewise some other less-guarded Seasons, when they suffered themselves to be borne away with the Tempest of Rage (and were thereby betrayed into the greatest Indecencies) upon cool Reflection afterwards, they were almost as angry with themselves for their Indiscretion in letting loose the Reins of their Fury. A virtual Confession This, that it was owing to their own Neglect, in not seasonably setting a Watch *before the Door of their Lips*; and by that Precaution, holding their Tongues *as it were with a Bridle*.

God certainly did not give us Reason, That distinguishing Prerogative of our Nature, That Candle which he hath lighted up in our Breasts, to be blown out with every accidental Gust of *Passion*: to be as a *Reed shaken with every Wind*, and broken down by any strong one. Either we *have* strong Passions, or we *have not*: If we have *not*, we derive from Nature that happy Composure of Temper, and that Absence of revengeful Thoughts, which Others

S E R M.

XI.

must take great Pains to acquire by all the Helps of Religion and Philosophy. And therefore, we *who are strong* ought to be more ready to *bear with the Infirmities of the Weak*. If we have strong, vigorous and warm Passions: then those Sparks are capable of inflaming the Soul with a strong Desire of attaining, and giving it a Kind of additional Life and Spirit actually to attain, every Thing that is great, worthy and honourable. The *Passions* are the Wings that enable us to rise above every Thing that is despicable, low and earthly; and therefore should dispose us to contemn, or more easily to conquer, every Thing that lies in our Way to the most excellent Wisdom and most sublime Virtue.

In short, it may not be in our Power always to *speak* and *act* so well as we might wish, for Want of Abilities or Opportunities; but it is *always* in our Power to *forbear acting* or *speaking*.

2dly, We may call to Mind a whole Sect of *Philosophers* with their Followers; who, by the mere Power of Discipline (enforced purely by Considerations drawn from the Dignity of Human Nature, Self-Repose, and Benevolence to Mankind) entirely suppressed all the disorderly Ferments of *Passion*; and that, on the most trying Occasions. Now, methinks, a Disciple of *Jesus Christ* should blush to observe, that the
weak

weak and *beggarly Elements* of Philosophy SERM.
XI.
 should have impowered the Espoufers of them, to reach a more sublime Point in the Practice of any Virtue, than the divine Energy of the *Holy Scriptures*. Those *Scriptures*, which do not only enjoin and encourage the Practice of all *Meekness* and *Gentleness* from the most engaging and interesting Motives, but which exhibit the most perfect Pattern of them in our *Lord* and *Master*; who left it too as the distinguishing Mark of his true Disciples, that *they should love one another*: those *Scriptures*, which will render Him that reads them with a *proper* Disposition, *thoroughly furnished to every good Work*; with a Disposition *influenced* by that *Holy Spirit*, which will *lead us into all Truth*, and incline us to all Goodness. But it is with Religion, as it is with Government: the best Constitution of Government ill administered, will not produce so salutary Effects, as a *bad* one whose Laws are duely enforced. It would be too long, in this Place, to enter into a Detail of the Reasons, why the Practice of Christians falls so short of their Principles. To save the Honour of our Holy Religion, at present let it only be observed (what is greatly to the Dishonour of Mankind) that a *wrong* Principle, if it meets with a strong Opposition, will often carry Men farther in Support of it, than *one* that
 is

S E R M.
XI.

is grounded on sound Reason and true Religion, if left to act at its own Liberty, and meeting with no Controul. The *Stoics* thought all the *Passions* absolutely evil; and we have a *Sect* among ourselves that look upon *Anger* in general in the same Light. The Inference we should draw from their greater Strictness and Severity in Practice is this, that we ought to possess our Minds with a strong Affection, a fervent Zeal, I had almost said, with a *Passion* for our Religion. In vain do we boast of the Purity of it, either in *this*, or any other Respect, if we see ourselves outdone in Practice, either by the * *Heathens*, or those who hold the *Truth of it in Unrighteousness*. That our Religion is most fit to inspire a true Temper of *Meekness*, and *Humility*, and of every other Virtue, we cannot doubt; it has been tried in the Times of Persecution, and, like *Gold purified in the Fire*, has appeared with greater Splendor, and still retained it's intrinsic Worth. Unworthy are we of the Blessing of Deliverance from that dreadful State: if a Security from Danger shall encourage a Licentiousness of

* Subit me certè subinde——non Stupor duntaxat sed Horror etiam——seriò apud me reputantem, quàm longè in multis ab eo absim, quod de se Vir iste (*Marcus Antoninus*) veri ad salutem perducentis Tramitis ignarus de se profitetur, nec quin verè & ingenuè, ambigi possè videtur.

Gatakeri Prælog. ad Marc. Anton.
Life.

Life. Rather let the Consideration of that S E R M.
XI. inestimable Blessing, as it is a very rational, be a standing and effectual Motive in our Hearts of the more punctual Performance of every Duty, now become so practicable and easy.

3dly, Let us endeavour to acquire a Greatness of Mind: by this I do not mean *Arrogance*, for that bespeaks a little Mind, a Mind that can reflect on nothing within itself that *looks* great except *Arrogance*: but a true Greatness of Mind arises from a true Judgment of Things, and a noble Ascendency of the Soul inclining us to act above what is barely our Duty. It is rising to the Sublime in Virtue. This will create a Reverence for ourselves, and will set us as far above the mean Gratification of giving any real Occasion of *Passion* to others; as of being susceptible of it when an Occasion may be given to us. We see how often Children, upon the most frivolous Grounds, kindle into Fury, and fall into Fits and Agonies; we see it, but do not think it worth our Notice, much less our Provocation. And how often do we see Men copying this Example on Occasions altogether as unmomentous? A Man of a superior Turn of Mind pays an equal Regard to Both; or rather pays a less Regard to the Latter, in Proportion as they make themselves hereby less than Children.

One

S E R M.

X I.

One of the Ancients said, that he had gained one Advantage from Philosophy; that it had brought him to wonder at Nothing. But it looks as if we, the Generality of us, were Strangers in the World, we are ever expressing our Surprize and Wonder at every Thing; and this Surprize prepares the Way for *Passion*. We wonder that we should meet with such a Behaviour, such a Treatment, such an Affront; whereas the greatest Wonder is, that we should wonder at it. A Man of sound Judgment soon takes such a Survey of Mankind, that he expects many Occurrences of that Sort. He expects to meet with Haughtiness from the Proud, Contempt from the Rich, Ill-manners from the Vulgar, both great and small; foolish Talking and Impertinence from the Ignorant and Conceited: he is prepared to meet with all this, and therefore no Way disconcerted when he does. He has reached a very excellent Point in Wisdom; he has learned to be unconcerned at the Follies of Mankind; to be unconcerned, because they are Follies. With an erect and vigorous, but calm and considerate Resolution, he advances in the High-road of Virtue: and, like one of the *Persian* Nobles, thinks it beneath his Wisdom and Dignity to stop short, and turn about to gaze at any Thing. He is placed in an upper Region; out of the Reach of all the Clouds, Vapours and Exhalations

halations that infest the Atmosphere of the Earth. The very *Suspicion* that a Man is despised, betrays a Consciousness of his own Littleness and Inferiority; but a Man of a truly great Mind thinks, and very rationally thinks, every Man that despises him, below him. He will rise so high as to do a good Office to, or bestow a Favour on the Man that has injured him, as considering his Adversary has thereby done himself *more* Injury: and that if he does not by this Means overcome him; he will at least make him ashamed of his Enmity and Opposition.

But, *Lastly*, Nothing can have so prevalent a Power to still all the undue Agitations of *Passion*, so apt to arise from the various Connexions we have with the Prejudices and Passions of others; nothing so fit to induce a smooth and easy Flow of Temper, as a frequent Application to the Throne of Grace, to beseech him who is *the God of Peace*, that *His Peace may rule in our Hearts*; that it may be the fixed and predominant Principle there. This *Presence with the Lord* is a Kind of *Absence from the Body*; an Absence from all the vain Imaginations, the Tumult of the Passions, and the sinful Thoughts which they suggest. The pure and serene Complacency that springs up in the Soul by this Intercourse with Heaven, shews that *here* she is nearest the Center of her true Happiness;

S E R M.
XI.

ness ; where the greatest Things of the Earth lose all their Power of Attraction. The awful Contemplation of God's Greatness, and the Sense of our Littleness, but too powerfully impressed by the mortifying View of our Infirmities, will soon bring us to a Conviction that *Pride*, the great Source of intemperate Passion, was not *made for Man*. The due Preparation of the Heart to wait upon God in this serious and solemn Exercise will be of admirable Use to remove far from us all *malicious, uncharitable and unbenevolent* Thoughts. Strange! that these should find a Place in our Hearts, but for an Hour, against Those whom we expect to be the Associates of our Happiness to all Eternity.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R M O N X I I .

The Duty of Charity stated and enforced.

P R O V . iii . 27 .

With-hold not Good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the Power of thine Hands to do it.

TO discourse upon any Duty in General, without applying to Particulars ; is little more than idle Declamation and empty Flourish : It is to let our Arrows fly at Random, when we should direct them to a certain Mark. That Charity in general is a Duty, No-body will deny : But there are Many, who, on the Account of particular Circumstances, think themselves entirely discharged from the Performance of it : Many, who, though they own the Obligation, yet disown it in it's due Degrees. Suffer me then to consider,

S E R M .
X I I .

I/ſ, Who

SERM.
XII.

Ist, Who are the Persons obliged to Give to charitable Uses, and in what Proportion.

IIdly, Who are the Persons qualified to Receive our Charity.

IIIIdly, The *Manner* in which we ought to bestow Charity. And,

Lastly, To lay before you the Motives to this Duty.

Charity, in the most comprehensive Sense of the Word, takes in a large Compass: It extends itself to a hearty Desire and Endeavour to do all possible Good by our Heads as well as our Hands; by our Words as well as Works: By instructing the Ignorant, advising the Mistaken, reclaiming the Wicked, comforting the Afflicted, encouraging the Virtuous and Worthy, &c. Charity even takes in Piety. For, not to mention that Piety, or a Regard to the Deity, is the Foundation of Charity, or Love to our Fellow-Creatures; exemplary Piety is one considerable Instance of doing Good: It is *letting our Light shine out before Men*, in order to promote that Reverence to the Deity which is the Basis of all Virtue.

No Man, of whatever Order or Condition in Life, can think himself unconcerned in

in the Duty of Charity considered in this S E R M.
View ; and though this be not the principal Point under our present Consideration, XII.
yet it may help to direct us in that which
is so, and is our first Enquiry; namely,

Ist, Who are the Persons within the Obligations of this Duty, as restrained to the Relief of the *Helpless*, the *Sick* and the *Needy*, &c.

One would think we should need few Arguments to persuade the Great, the Opulent, and the Able, to present themselves the foremost in this Rank, and to undertake the principal Share in this Duty. They are Stewards, it is true, and must give an Account : But happy sure is the Steward when his Trust is of such a Nature, that the more freely he dispenses, the more faithful he shall be accounted : When the Merit of his Liberality shall be placed, not to his *Master's*, but to his *own* Account : When the *Prayers* of the *Poor* shall draw down upon him the Praise and Reward of his *Lord*.

This too is a Virtue whereof one would hope They would be inclined to shew themselves more eminent Patterns ; because as their Station fits them peculiarly for it, so it denies them the Occasions of practising many Virtues of another Sort. They meet with few Affronts, or Injuries, or Oppressions to employ the Virtues of Meekness,
T Forgiveness

SERM.
XII.

Forgiveness and Patience: They experience but little of hard Fortune, less of hard Labour, and nothing at all of the Distresses of Poverty, Hunger, and Cold and Nakedness, to call forth the Virtues of Patience and Resignation and an humble Reliance on Providence.

Now what more proper Method of supplying the *Absence of these Virtues* in themselves, than by extending their Charity to those very Persons who do practise them, — by letting *Their* Bounty render the Practice of them somewhat more easy — by allowing themselves to become, in some Measure, the Instrument in God's Hand of rewarding them?

Their Good Deeds then ought to bear Proportion to their Abilities. GOD, who is the Fountain-Head of every good Gift, has made Them the Channels whereby He intends to convey his Blessings to Mankind. Their Charity may begin at Home; but after the Stream of it has watered their own Garden, they ought not to confine it there; but let it flow abroad to enrich the neighbouring Soil, and to dispense Plenty and Fruitfulness all around.

This is so agreeable to the common Notions of Mankind, that Every-Body condemns the mean and sordid Spirit of that Wretch; who, though God has blessed Him with Abundance, and consequently
with

with a Power of Blessing others, is yet S E R M. XII.
relentless to the Cries of those who have
nothing to plead for them but, what is the
most powerful Pleader with every generous
Mind, extreme Misery; and have nothing
to return but their Prayers; Prayers, poured
forth from the Fulness of a grateful Heart.
They look with Abhorrence upon a Man,
who is ever amassing Riches without lay-
ing any Thing out in Charitable Uses; as
greedy as the Sea, and as barren as the
Shore.

Numbers, it is true, think they have
done enough in declaiming against the
Practice of such Persons: for upon the
Great and Opulent they think the whole
Burden of this Duty ought to rest: But for
Themselves, they being of somewhat a
lower Class, they desire to be excused.
Their Circumstances, they say, are but just
easy; just sufficient to answer the Demands
of their Families, and their own necessary
Expences; and therefore they plead utter
Inability, and expect to be totally exempted
from the Performance of this Duty. But,
before this Excuse will be of any Avail, it
behoves them to consider; whether they do
not indulge themselves in Expences unsuit-
able to their Rank and Condition; such as
Luxury, Gaming, or other prodigal Di-
versions. If this be the Case, it is no slight
Matter to waste that Fortune in Idleness

SERMON. and Riot, which should make them *Feet to*
 XII. *the Lambe, and Eyes to the Blind*; as a
Father to the Orphan, and as a Husband to
the Widow. It is no slight Matter to squander away *That* which, if rightly used, would purchase for them the most valuable Treasures; Treasures in Heaven; But, if abused in unnecessary Expences or sinful Intemperance, lays a Weight upon the Soul, which will make them as dead to all Sentiments of Piety, as they are to those of Charity.

Competency will be a Word of much too large a Signification, if we are to understand by it *Supplies* for costly Eating and Drinking; *Supplies* for high Enjoyment of Life; for Retinue and Equipage. Imaginary Wants are boundless, and Charity must never begin if it is postponed till these have an End.

He, it is true, is *worse than an Infidel*, who does not *provide for his Family*; But it is as true, that our Family ought not to engross all our Substance exclusively of the Poor, who have a Right; even God's Right. For some Part of what we have is *due* to God as an Acknowledgment that we derive from Him the Whole: And God has made the Poor His Substitutes.

I know not whether several of the inferior Sort may not have taken up a Notion, that They have nothing to do in the Works of
 Charity:

Charity: A Notion very false, and withal very dangerous. Rich and Poor are equally concerned in the Duty, but in Proportion to their Circumstances. And he that has *Little* is as strictly bound to give something out of that *Little*, as he that has more is obliged to give more. According to that of *Tobit*: *If thou hast Abundance, give Alms accordingly; if thou hast but Little, be not afraid to give according to that Little; for thou layest up a good Treasure for thyself against the Day of Necessity.* As the Rich are obliged to relieve the Poor, so even the Poor are also bound, in Proportion to their Circumstances, to help one another. What an Advantage was it to the *poor Widow*, that She, by bringing her *Mite* only into the *Treasury*, could thereby exercise a nobler Charity than the greatest of all there had done! Have the Poor *Little* to give? Charity does not consist in Much or Little, but in doing the best we can, and doing it with a *willing Mind*. The smallest Present imaginable may be the greatest Bounty. And if by the Smallness of it, it prove but of little Benefit to the Receiver, yet it may be of inestimable Use and Benefit to the Giver. And if a Day-Labourer, for Instance, contributes a Day's Work, such a Charity may weigh more, than large Sums from others, and be in the Sight of God of great Price. Even the inferior

S E R M.
XII.

Sort sometimes give into Expences that are not strictly necessary, from which therefore they may and ought to retrench somewhat to bestow on those who want even Necessaries.

The only Persons then that seem to have a fair Right of pleading an entire Exemption from this Duty are Those whose Circumstances are deeply involved: For till we can satisfy our Creditors we ought not to relieve the Poor. We must be *just* before we can be *charitable*. It would be unjust to give away what is not our own; and nothing is properly our own but what remains after our just Debts are cancelled. *Owe no Man any Thing*, says St. Paul, *but to love one another*; when we owe no Man any Thing in the *legal Sense* but what we can pay, then we must answer the other great Debt, as much a Debt in the Eye of Reason — the *Loving one another*, expressed in proper Instances of Kindness and Benevolence.

What has been the greatest Bar to the Exercise of this Virtue is, the Difficulty of pitching upon any fixed and stated Proportion, short of which our Charity ought not to fall: And where the determinate Measure of Duty is not or cannot be assigned, there Men's Interest or Covetousness will be ever suggesting Excuses for the Non-Performance of it. We ought to adjust our Bounty to
our

our Abilities; but, as there is no fixed Stand-^{S E R M.}
ard, we seem willing to take Advantage of ^{XII.}
that Circumstance, and to measure our Abi-
lities by our Inclination.

In Order to remove this Impediment, if we are not more disposed to deceive than to direct our Consciences, we ought to follow the Rule laid down in all doubtful Cases, *i. e.* to chuse the Part which is least dangerous. As in the Gratifications then of Eating and Drinking, we should rather take too little than too much of our Liberty, for Fear of being betrayed into Intemperance; so in the Exercise of Charity, we should rather exceed than fall short, for Fear of incurring the Guilt of Uncharitableness.

Again, the Apostle, giving the *Corinthians* Directions, orders; *That every Man should lay by in Store as God had prospered him*: That is, according to his Income, Increase or Revenue. Here then it may be of Use to shew, that the *Jews* were, by the express Command of God, obliged to appropriate the tenth Part of their Revenue every three Years to Charitable Uses. Thus we read in *Deuteronomy* xiv. 28. *At the End of three Years thou shalt bring forth all the Tithe (or Tenth) of thine Increase that same Year, and shalt lay it up within thy Gates: And the Stranger, the Fatherless and the Widow*

SERM. *which are within thy Gates, shall come and*
 XII *eat, and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God*
may bless Thee in all the Work of thine
Hand which thou doest.

Now the tenth Part of their Income every three Years is the thirtieth Part of their Yearly Revenue: If then the *Jews*, under a Dispensation which laid less Stress upon Charity, were bound, besides their ordinary and occasional Charities, to set aside the thirtieth Part of their Increase for the Poor: Certainly we, who are blessed with a Religion where Charity shines with the most distinguished Lustre; we, whose *Righteousness* ought to exceed the *Righteousness* of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, should not at any Time fall short of this Measure, how much soever our Generosity may prompt us sometimes to go beyond it.

But farther, it ought to be remembered that one or two occasional Acts of Charity are not sufficient to denominate a Man *Charitable*. He alone is a *Charitable Man* whose Disposition is always inclined to Charity: Who is at all Times glad to relieve Distress when he can, and sorry when he cannot; Whose Bounty reaches as far as his Power extends, whose Benevolence takes in *all* the Objects of Charity, and whose Discretion singles out the *most proper*: which brings me,

II. In the Second Place, to consider Who S E R M.
are the Persons qualified to Receive our XII.
Charity. And,

1st, We ought rather to succour the *Distressed*, than increase the Happiness of the *Easy*: Because we are to do the most Good that we can. In the latter Case, it is like giving Wine to a Man that hath already quenched his Thirst; in the former, it is like giving a Cordial to a Person fainting. According to that of *Ecclesiasticus*; *Mercy is seasonable in Time of Affliction, like Clouds of Rain in Time of Drought.* It is sending a gracious Rain, and refreshing what is weary and parched up. Even the *Bad*, much more the *Good*, are to be relieved in Cases of extreme Necessity. It is a Mistake to imagine that Hatred to Sin should make us uncompassionate to Sinners in Extremity. To convince us of this we need only reflect, that if the Son of God had regarded Sinners with the same unpitying Eye, Mankind had never been redeemed. Had God hated Sinners after this Manner the World itself had long ago been annihilated. No: If suffering *Innocence* only gave a Title to Compassion, the Sun had never rose on the Unjust; no, never perhaps on Thee, who deniest that Mercy to suffering Vice, which Thou dost expect from God. Our Pity, the universal Language of Nature, calls loudly upon us to relieve both
the

S E R M.
XII.

the Good and the Bad, who are just ready to perish. Those then are the most proper Objects of Relief, who are incapable of relieving themselves. But,

2dly, The best Charity we can give to the *Poor* that have Ability and Strength, is to employ them in *Work* that They may not contract an Habit of Idleness; and so the Public not only lose the Advantage of their Service, but likewise become chargeable with an useless Incumbrance.

But yet, if *such* be not able to earn a competent Livelihood; if the Produce of their Labour be not proportionable to the Demands of a numerous Family; then still they are proper Objects of our Charity. Nor can there well be a more pitiable Case than that of those whose daily Drudgery, after the utmost they can do, will not procure daily Bread for themselves and their Household. To consider a Parent, who has toiled out the live-long Day in Hardship, who yet at Night, instead of finding Rest, shall find a Pain more insupportable than all his Fatigues abroad — the Cravings of a small helpless Family which He cannot satisfy; this is enough to give the most lively Touches of Compassion to every Heart that is not past Feeling. Certainly when the Poor have done all they *can* for a Supply of their Necessities; the Rich do not do all they *ought*, if they do not make up, what is wanting,

wanting, out of Their Abundance. If there S E R M.
be any Case more deplorable it is, XII.

3dly, That of *Theirs*, who, after having been accustomed to Ease and Plenty, are, by some unavoidable Reverse of Fortune, by no Folly or Fault of their own, condemned to bear, what they are the least able to bear, the galling Load of Poverty: Who, after having been perhaps *Fathers to the Fatherless* in the Day of their Prosperity, are now become the *Objects* of that Charity they were wont so liberally to dispense. These *Objects* plead the more strongly for our Relief, because they are the least able to reveal their Misery, and make their Wants known. But,

4thly, *Fatherless Children* particularly demand our Care, to fence their tender Bloom of Years against the early Blasts of Vice; to conduct them with a safe but gentle Hand through the dangerous Stages of Infancy, Childhood, and Youth. To give them at an Age, when their Minds are most susceptible of *good* Impressions, and their Memories the most tenacious of *any* Impressions; to give them early Notices of Piety, to enable them to become useful Members of Society; who if turned a-drift and left defenceless would, without the extraordinary Grace of God, become so many Pests and Nuisances to it.

And

SERM.
XII.

And is it not much more discreet and rational to apply our Charity to *such* Objects, where there can be no Danger of Misapplication, than to run the Risque of misplacing it upon *Vagrants* and *common Beggars*? Who, for ought we know, may be Counterfeits; whose greatest *Want* may be that of Virtue.

I would not however be misunderstood: When there are strong Appearances and Symptoms, that *these last* are in extreme Necessity, the good-natured and charitable Part is to be preferred. If it happen to be an Error, it is at the worst an Error on the right Side.

5thly, Another Sort of Persons that have a Right to our Charity are the *Sick*: *Solomon* hath observed long ago, that when *Heaviness in the Heart of a Man maketh it stoop*, then a good Word *maketh it peculiarly glad*. Reflect therefore seriously and tenderly on the Condition of such Persons; for they sometimes suffer a good deal from the mere *Inattention* of those about them, who yet could not be brought on any Terms to do *deliberately*, what they apprehended to be cruel or unkind. Let us, in the Language of afflicted *Job*, (for afflicted Persons know best how to speak of Affliction) let us *put our Soul into their Soul's Stead*: Let us patiently bear those Instances of Peevishness and Fretfulness into which, under

der such a Pressure, they may be apt to S. R. M. XII. fall; imputing them to their Distemper, and not to themselves. In a Word, let us endeavour to ease their Sufferings as heartily as if they were our own; and to bear our own as patiently and resignedly as we generally do those of others.

Some indeed of the tender and compassionate Make seem to feel so much for and with others, that one cannot help wishing they might feel as little as possible for themselves. They are sure at least of suffering nothing *alone*. Every one that hath the least Tincture of Humanity must suffer with them in Distress; *with* them, *from* whom they are sure to suffer nothing; nothing by an unkind Word or Deed.

This Point, though well deserving our Attention, is but seldom touched upon; for which Reason I have dwelt the longer upon it.

III. I now proceed to my third general Head, which was to consider the *Manner* in which we are to dispense our Charity.

Acts of Mercy, public and private, have both their peculiar and distinguishing Excellencies; Neither are to be omitted. To say that because our Saviour has commanded us to give our Alms *privately*, therefore we

SERM.
XII.

we are not to exercise any Acts of *public* Charity; would be as ridiculous as to argue, that because private Prayer is commanded, public Worship is forbidden. To put our Virtue to the Test; to try whether it be genuine (as founded upon a pure unmixed Principle of pleasing God without any sinister Views of worldly Applause) our Saviour has ordered us to give Alms secretly; and our *Father which seeth in Heaven will reward us openly*. That Virtue, on the other Hand, might not lose the Benefit of public Example, He has commanded that, at other Times, we *let our Light so shine before Men, that they may see our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven*. If all our Charity was to be entirely secret, removed from the Eye of the World; it would decay and dwindle into nothing. Just as Religion itself would, for Want of a conspicuous, exemplary, avowed Piety: Both the one and the other then stand in great Need of a public Countenance and Encouragement, which stamp a Credit upon them in the midst of a crooked and degenerate Age. If Charity, on the other Hand, was to be done always publicly and openly: with Religion again it would degenerate into mere Hypocrisy, Formality, and outside Shew. Wisely therefore, very wisely, has our Saviour (who has given us the most perfect Model of Religion) en-
joined

joined both the public and the private S E R M.
Practice of this one great and essential Duty XII.
of it.

In the Exercise of public Charity great Care is indeed to be taken that we suffer not ourselves to be influenced by Ostentation, or any sinister Motive. Even the Sense of shewing a good Example, and the inward Risings of Pity, ought to be backed, if they be not introduced, by the most noble and generous Motive of all, the discharging our Duty to God.

By the Way ; what an exalted Turn of Mind must He have, who can be content to suspend all Thoughts of Praise, till he receives it in that Place where his Actions cannot be misinterpreted ; who can put off the Desire of Applause till he receives *that* Applause of infinitely more Value, than the united Commendation of all Beings in the whole World besides, that most invaluable Applause of his Creator—*Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord?*

But besides the Circumstance of *Place*, there is the *Manner* in the *Person* to be observed, which is sometimes as engaging as the Bounty he bestows. It is the least Glory in a Person of Worth to be superior to others in Point of Station and Fortune : His greatest Honour is to make that Superiority sit gracefully upon him, without any
forbidding

S E R M.

XII.

forbidding Appearances ; and to make his Inferior as little sensible of it as possible by an easy Dignity, and by an affable Complacency of Behaviour. An Action good in itself is greatly recommended by an agreeable Manner of doing it : An agreeable Manner being to Actions, what a lively Manner of Expression is to our Sense ; it beautifies and adorns it, and gives it all the Advantage whereof it is capable. There is the same Difference between a beneficial Deed, when endeared by an easy, affable Deportment, and when destitute of that Circumstance, as between a beautiful Object, when enlivened by the chearful Light of the Sun, and when exhibited in a dim, sickly Light. In a Word, it is our Duty in general not only to have Virtue, but to make our Virtue truly amiable. A Gift may be great in itself, but if it is dispensed with several ungracious Circumstances, in an over-bearing Way, or without the Appearance of a willing Mind, it is like an ungainly Building, admirable only for it's Magnitude ; which does not affect or strike us half so much as one of smaller Dimensions adjusted with Symmetry and Harmony of Parts, and set off with the additional Beauty of decent Ornaments.

A Delicacy of this Kind is most chiefly to be observed with those who have *not been used* to receive Charity : Where *we* should

should endeavour as much to conceal our Benevolence, as *they* do to hide their Misery: Imitating herein the Behaviour of an Heathen Philosopher, who contrived his Bounty to be conveyed in so indirect a Manner, that Chance rather than Design seemed to have had the Disposal of it. But this leads me,

S E R M.
XII.

IVthly, and *Lastly*, To lay before you the *Motives* to Charity; and,

1. The first may be drawn from *Compassion*.

Compassion is the Call of our *Father* which is in *Heaven*, to us His Children who are in Prosperity, to put us upon Relieving our Brethren who are in Distress. This is an Affection wisely interwoven in our Frame and Nature by the Author of all Nature: That whereas dry and abstracted Reason is too sedentary and remiss a Counsellor, we might have a more instant and vigorous Pleader in our Breasts to excite us to acts of Charity. As far indeed as it is ingrafted in us, it is mere *Instinct*; but when we cultivate and cherish it till we *love Mercy*; when we dwell upon each tender Sentiment that opens our Minds, and enlarges our Heart; then it becomes a *Virtue*. Every one, who has not erased all Sentiments of Humanity, must be intimately conscious (the very highest Degree of

U

Certainty)

S E R M.
XII.

Certainty) that he has *such* a Principle: And it is a material Observation, which may still give us a deeper Sense of the Goodness and Wisdom of God in framing our Nature, that we are more passionately and feelingly affected to behold the extreme *Anguish* of a Person that is even a Stranger to us, than we are to see the *Happiness* of one that is indifferent to us. We are more apt in *this Case to weep with them that weep*, than we are in the other *to rejoice with them that do rejoice*. Now the Reason, why God has given us more quick and vigorous Touches of Compassion in the one Case, than of Joy in the other, is plainly this; it is more in our Power to relieve Distress, than it is to promote Happiness. When a Person has had some considerable Success, our hearty Congratulation is in a great measure, if not altogether, useless and unavailing; he has already gained his Point, and *our Joy* will add little or nothing to *his*. But when we see a Person in Distress, a quick and pungent Sense of his Pains is of great Use to him: It prompts us immediately to relieve him, or to solicit his Relief; and, in relieving him, we in some Sense relieve ourselves. Reason, however noble a Principle, is like Old-Age; too slow, languid and unresolving: But the Passions, like Youth, when they are heartily interested, set every Engine at Work; and

and leave nothing unattempted to compass their End. Whoever then thou art, whose Heart is hardened and waxed gross, put thyself in the Room of some poor unfriended Wretch, beset perhaps with a large Family; broken with Miseries, and pining with Poverty; his Mind as it were bleeding inwards, while silent Grief, like a Worm at the Core, preys upon his Vitals: In such a Case what wouldest Thou think it reasonable thy rich Neighbours should do? — that they, like the *Priest* and *Levite* in the Gospel, should look on Thee with an Eye of Indifference, and then *pass by on the other Side* regardless? — or that, like the good *Samaritan*, they should *pour* Balm into thy wounded Spirit? — Be thyself the Judge, and whatever thou shalt think reasonable thy Neighbour should *do* unto Thee, in such a Situation; go now, and *do likewise* unto them. Make the Case of the Poor your own, and then consider how much you would, or might with Reason, *expect* from the Rich and Easy, and then *give* accordingly.

2. The second *Motive* is the Pleasure of *Benevolence*.

The Reason and Foundation of Charity, the principal End and Design of Almsgiving, looks not more at the Relief of the Indigent, than at the training Men up to mutual Love and Good-will, in order to

S E R M.
XII.

qualify them for Heaven. Mean and illiberal is the Man, whose Soul the Good of himself can intirely fill and ingross. True Benevolence, extensive as the Light of the Sun, takes in all Mankind. It is not indeed in your Power to support all the Incurable and Aged ; it is not in your Power to train up in the Paths of Virtue several helpless, friendless, fatherless Children. But if, as far as the Compass of your Power reaches, nothing is hid from the Heat of your Bounty, and, where your Power falls short, you are cordially affected to see the Work done by others, or heartily sorry to see it is not done : Those Charities which you could not do, nay which were never done, will be placed to your Account. To grasp thus the whole System of Reasonable Beings with an overflowing Love, is to be—what shall I call it? — it is to be almost infinitely good—it is at least to make as near Approaches as possible to infinite Goodness. And can there be any Thing more transporting than to possess this humane, this God-like Quality ? Yes, the Pleasure rises higher, if our Abilities be great, as well as our Inclination. What can affect a generous Soul more, than to make Misery and Woe vanish before him, like Darkness before the Light ; to raise a Heart that was sinking beneath the Weight of Grief ? To brighten up that Countenance, which was overcast

overcast with Sorrow, into Joy and Glad-^{SERM.}
ness? To revive with refreshing Showers^{XII.}
of Love and Kindness that *barren and dry*
Land where no Water was? How must his
Heart *burn within him* while his Hands are
thus stretched out! Believe me, it is but a
well-judged, more refined, and better Taste
for Pleasure, to lay out, in *undoing the*
heavy Burden of our Fellow-Creatures, that
Money which all of us, more or less, ex-
pend in innocent but useless Gratifications;
and too many of us, it may be, in criminal
Pleasures. And who would not deny him-
self the short-lived Indulgence of some
Appetite, some trifling and gay Diversion,
rather than see his Brother pinched with
Necessity, and starving with Want? Deny
himself, did I say? No; *He* denies him-
self the most, who refuses to purchase so
many lasting and unallayed Pleasures at so
easy a Rate.

We are affected with delightful Sensa-
tions when we see even the *inanimate* Parts
of the Creation, those Meadows, those
Trees, and those Flowers in a flourishing
State. There must be some deep and
rooted Melancholy at the Heart, when all
Nature appears smiling and chearful about
us in its most advantageous Dress, if we
are not inclined to correspond with the Rest
of the Creation, and join in the universal
Chorus of Joy. But if Meadows and

SERM.
XII.

Trees in their Verdure, if Flowers in their Bloom, and all the *vegetable* Parts of Nature in Chearfulness *at this Season*, can inspire Gladness into the Heart, and drive away all Sadness and Despair; to see the *rational* Parts of the Creation flourishing, ought to give us a Pleasure as much superior, as the latter are above the former in the Scale of Beings. But still the Pleasure is greater, if we have been instrumental in contributing to their Happiness; if we have watered these Plants with our Bounty, and fenced them from the Inclemencies of the Seasons.

He that centers all his Regard upon himself, exclusively of others, has placed his Affections very oddly; he has placed them on the most worthless Object in the World—himself. He that has shut his Hands, and steeled his Heart, against all Impressions of Compassion, is a most insignificant Blank in the Creation. He may have Sense enough to *get* and *keep* his Fortune; but he has too little Spirit truly to *relish* and *enjoy* it, by communicating it to others. For Joy like Light grows greater by being communicated; And that Happiness, which is solitary, is but Happiness by Halves. And if, as our Saviour says, *it is more blessed to give than to receive*, then you are to look upon *him* who asks, and deserves your Charity, as your greatest

est Benefactor. He that brings you an Opportunity of doing Good, substantial Good, in Effect *obliges* you; he brings you what is far more valuable, and more valued by every good Man, than the Gold and Silver which you part with to him. To be *rich in good Works* is the most lasting Riches.

SERM.
XII.

But this brings me to the last *Motive* which at present I shall suggest for our Charity, which is,

3. Thirdly, The Recompence of the *Reward*.

We are all, Rich and Poor, travelling to one Country; and we should not scruple to accommodate our indigent Fellow-Travelers with Necessaries on the Road, when we are sure of being repaid at our Journey's End with an immense Reward. And remember that at the last Day, the great Question will not be, Whether you have been *negatively* good, whether you have done no Harm? but, What Good you have done? What *Hungry ye have fed*? What *Sick ye have visited*? The *Rich-Man* in the Gospel is not charged with injuring any Person, or defrauding his Neighbour. The only Fault recorded is, that he *sared sumptuously every Day*, while *Lazarus lay at his Gate* perishing for Want of common Necessaries. He was one of that Set of Men, a numerous Set, who are very hos-

S E R M.
XII. pitable to those that do not want, and very unfriendly to those that do.

This then was his Crime ; and yet the next Report that we have of him is ; that *in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments.* A melancholy and shocking Consideration to those *who have this World's Goods, and yet shut up their Bowels of Compassion* against their Brethren in Distress.

Our Saviour has made the Poor his Representatives : — *Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.* And Solomon says, *He that giveth unto the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord.* Charity is then a Treasure transferred to Heaven. It bestows on the Receiver the Comforts of this Life ; and on the Giver the Glories of another.

It is the last Thing I should believe, that the Man who acted by a Principle of Obedience to his Maker, has cherished each generous and liberal Movement of the Soul, with a Head ever-studious to contrive, a Heart ever-willing to promote, and Hands ever-active to distribute to, the Good of his Fellow-Creatures, should notwithstanding be doomed to be an Associate for ever of those accursed Spirits, in a Place where Benevolence never sheds it's kindly Beams : But Malice and Anguish, and Blackness of Darkness reign for evermore.

No:

No: The Riches that we have given SERM.
away will remain with us for ever. *Charity* XII.
never faileth—the same Habit of Love
which we have begot and confirmed by
many repeated Acts of Kindness will ac-
company us into another World. When
we have *shewn Mercy* to our Fellow-Crea-
tures, we may safely expect *it* from our
Creator.

To whom, &c.

SERMON XIII.

The Christian Life a progressive
State.

PROV. iv. 18.

*The Path of the Just is as the shining
Light; shining more and more unto the
perfect Day.*

SERM.
XIII.

A Great many, and some too who call themselves Philosophers (who, by the Way, never understood the true End of Living) have represented human Life, as a dull Business not worth a Man's Care; where the same Things come over and over again, *like a Tale that is told*: Which, however entertaining it may appear while it is new; yet, by frequent Repetitions, at last becomes perfectly tedious and insipid. The Consequence of which has been, that many, viewing the Picture in this disagreeable Light, have been inclined to throw off all Concern about it; any farther than to arrive at a

secure Indolence of Body, and a peaceful S E R M.
Tranquillity, or rather Insensibility of Mind; XIII.
to shut out all Reflexion any farther than
just to remedy or remove such Incon-
veniences, as the common Accidents of Life
may occasionally produce: and others,
loathing the same Viands so often served
up, or fretted and soured by the many
Crosses and Calamities intailed upon this
imperfect State, have, as ridiculously as
rashly, put an End to their Being.

And true it is, that the Lives of too
many have been but one barren Circle, to
which they have been as it were enchanted,
going round and round continually; ever
in Motion, but never ridding any Ground,
But though many may have *made* Life a
dull Round of insignificant Actions, yet no
Man had ever *Occasion* to make it so. It
is so indeed to Brutes, which soon ar-
rive at that Pitch of Perfection which is al-
lotted to their Nature: Where they must
stop short, without a Possibility of going
any farther. *Sense*, which is the highest
natural Power they have, moves in a nar-
row Sphere; it's Objects in Comparison
few; and moreover dull and gross: And
therefore not only come more quickly
round, but become more languid and dull
in every Revolution. But Man is endued
with nobler Faculties, and presented with
nobler Objects whereon to exercise and
employ

S E R M.
XIII.

employ them. The Contemplation of all moral and divine Truths to engage his Understanding : The Love of the Creator, and all the Beauties of the natural and moral World to attract and captivate his Affections : The Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God manifest in the whole Extent of the Creation, to exalt his Admiration, and call forth all his Praise. The Opportunities of all good Actions to produce the Pleasures of Virtue and a good Conscience. Nothing can bound the noble Range of Reason, ever improving, and ever improvable ; nothing can abate the Ardor of the Affections, which are placed upon the Fountain and Foundation of all Love, of all Beauty and Harmony : Nothing can diminish the Admiration of a Universe, where the very minutest Parts are above the highest human Comprehension : Nothing can deaden the Pleasure of Virtue and a good Conscience, which, the more they are tasted, the more they are desirable. Here is a noble Path for a rational Creature to travel in : His continued Advancement in it, his daily Improvement in Knowledge, Virtue and Goodness, will constitute his highest Perfection here, and terminate in a perfect Consummation of endless Bliss and Glory : *The Path of the Just is as the shining Light ; shining more and more*

more unto the perfect Day. From which S E R M.
Words I shall take Occasion to shew, XIII.

Ist, That it is in every Man's Power to make his Life a progressive State.

IIldy, Offer some Reasons and Considerations to engage us in such a Practice; and,

Lastly, Conclude with some Reflexions relative to the Subject.

And, *First*, it is in every Man's Power to make his Life a progressive State. If we trace the Progress of the human Mind from the first Dawnings of Sense and Reason, we may see from what small Beginnings it acquires a prodigious Store of intellectual Knowledge. The View fills us with Admiration, and we are naturally led to wish, nay, to make it the Sum of our Wishes, that we could be able to traverse those Regions of Science, whereof some noble Genius's have made themselves Masters: But though we admire, we need not complain. It has indeed pleased the All-wise Governor of the World to make a great Distinction in the original Frame of human Souls, with Respect to the *intellectual* Powers: A Provision absolutely necessary for answering the Purposes of civil Government, where a Subordination is necessarily

S E R M.
XIII.

cessarily implied ; for so much Wisdom will always produce so much Power. But whether we may always observe it or no, our Saviour's Command to his Disciples is virtually fulfilled in every Community: *He that is the greatest among you, let him be your Servant.* If the Men who are blessed with distinguished Abilities, make a proper Use of them (and otherwise they need not be envied) they are really increasing the Measure of the public Good ; and, in that, doing Service to the meanest Individual : And therefore Reputation and Esteem are but a due Acknowledgment for their good Offices. But to expect or desire Honour from *Men* is but a low Ambition. Let us try to recommend ourselves to the Approbation of him, whose *Judgment is not as Man's Judgment.* The very best Part of Knowledge is knowing how to discharge rightly our Duty to God ; and therefore the Performance of that Duty must still be of higher Estimation. And in this Mankind are more upon an equal footing. The moral Powers, like the natural Perfections of the Body, are more equally distributed ; and in them there is as large a Field laid open for our Advancement towards Perfection, as there is in the Intellectual.

It is true, we may have unhappily struck into a wrong Path, and be wandering

ing in the Ways of Wickedness: But, by a serious Recollection, and Application to Divine Mercy, we may yet find a *Lantern to our Feet, and a Light unto our Paths.* Our evil Habits, those Cords that hold us in Captivity to Sin, though we may not be able at once to cast them away from us, yet we may insensibly weaken, and at last break asunder, by gradually unravelling the smaller Lines of their Contexture. Our Inclinations, that may have taken a wrong Bent, we may counteract, and by Degrees recover to their original Rectitude. Where our Nature favours a particular Virtue, there we may second it, and graft upon it; under the Branches whereof other hopeful Seeds may take Root, spring up, and prosper. After this we may still be looking into the Culture of the Soul, and studying daily Improvements, by calling forth Virtues, or several Degrees of Virtue, that have not yet made their Appearance, by cherishing and bringing to Perfection those that have. Thus will our Minds resemble those Fruit-Trees, in which, while several of the Productions are come to Maturity, others are blossoming, and giving Promises of reaching the same Degrees of Excellence.

No Man knows what he can do, till he is firmly resolved to do whatever he can. When Men have thought themselves obliged

S E R M.
XIII.

liged to set about any Business in good Earnest, they have done that which their Indolence made them suppose impossible. There are several Abilities unknown to the Possessors, which lie hid in the Mind for Want of an Occasion to call them forth.

Instead of arming themselves with holy Resolutions, instead of summoning all the Courage that ought to inspire every faithful Soldier of Christ; how apt are Men to frighten and intimidate themselves by imaginary Difficulties and Dangers? In their View of the heavenly *Canaan* they act as those who went to spy out the earthly: They look upon themselves to be no more than Grasshoppers, in Comparison of the Enemies they are to encounter; and thereby check and controul that honest Ambition, which it is their special Interest to cherish, to animate and incite: The Ambition of standing foremost in the Rank of good Men.

One can scarce have too high an Opinion of the Powers of the human Soul, especially in the Affair of our Salvation; and scarce too low an Opinion of Men's Inclination to exert those Powers in that most important Case.

But farther, though God does not dispense a Measure of Grace equal in itself to every Individual, because some Men may have greater Difficulties from the Force of Constitution

Constitution to struggle with than others, or SER. M.
 for other Reasons unknown to us; yet he has XIII.
 dispensed to every one a Measure of Grace
 equal to the Duty he demands from him,
 equal to the Reward he intends for him.
 God hath given to no Man *irresistible Grace*;
 for when he *had done all that could be done*
to his Vineyard, yet it brought forth wild
Grapes. But he has given to every Man
effectual Grace; such Grace, I mean, as in
 Reason may, and in Fact will, produce the
 intended Effect, if the Receiver uses his
 utmost Endeavours; that is, if he takes all
 the Care that Men customarily and ordina-
 rily do in all other Points, though of less
 Concern, when they set their Hearts upon
 them. For God hath promised in Scrip-
 ture, that he will deal with us in bestowing
 Grace as an affectionate Parent does in giv-
 ing his Child a Sustenance. He will not
 give him so sparing a Provision as may
 barely keep him alive; but such a Suffi-
 ciency as may make Life easy and comfort-
 able to him: Even so will our heavenly
 Father bestow the Riches of his Grace to
 facilitate the Election of those, whose
 Hearts are set upon their eternal Interest,
 with as much Earnestness as they sometimes
 are upon their temporal; and who use the
 same Industry and Application in the At-
 tainment of the former, as they do in the
 latter.

S E R M.
XIII.

To this let it be added, that although in other Cases the Will and the Power are very distinct Things, yet here they are in many Instances the same, and perfectly coincide; for, as all Virtue is seated in the Will, the very fixed and determined Will to be virtuous, is Virtue itself. He who is resolved, with the whole Energy of his Mind, to be a better Man, is, in Fact, the better for being so resolved; as, on the other side, he that is resolved to be wicked, is really so, though he may not have an Opportunity of perpetrating the outward Act.

We see then, that we have the same natural Power, the same gracious Aid and Assistance, for persevering and improving in every Virtue and Grace, as we had originally for attaining them. What then should restrain or hinder our continual Progress? Does the Difficulty lie in the Thing itself? Is it a harder Task to continue and grow more perfect in a Habit of Virtue, than it is at first to acquire such Habit? On the contrary, it has always been presumed, and always allowed, that whatever Difficulties and Discouragements may attend our first Entrance on the Paths of Virtue, yet on pursuing our Journey we find the Prospect more chearful and inviting every Step we take: Whatever Mixtures of Vice may debase the first Compositions of Virtue, yet each

each Repetition of good Actions, like the repeated Effays of the Refiner, separates the Dross, and leaves the Substance more pure. However the Soul, at it's first Rising from the Ground, may flutter and mount heavily; yet, when once it is thoroughly upon the Wing, it flies along with an easy, vigorous, and continued Motion; and, in Allusion to the Words of the Text, though the first Dawn of Religion upon the Souls of Men may be but as the Wings of the Morning, spreading themselves upon the Mountains, yet it gradually attains to a meridian Altitude.

Labour and Exercise may be prosecuted to such Degrees of Excess as to render the Body weary, weak, and languid; the Pursuits of Knowledge may be carried so far as to impair the intellectual Powers; so that an immoderate Application to Study may not only create a *Weariness in the Flesh*, but may endanger the whole Constitution of the Mind: And in endeavouring to make ourselves *wise*, by sifting into subtle Speculations, we may, literally speaking, become *Fools*: Nay, our very Will, when oppressed and overborn by irregular and tumultuous Passions, is forced frequently to yield and give Way; whereby we are delivered over to the Extremes either of Rage or Melancholy. But none of the Faculties of our Minds, or Organs of our

SERM.
XIII.

Bodies, are the least endangered by the Meditations on, and the Practices of Virtue and Religion. On the contrary, Virtue has the same Effect on the Eye of the Understanding, as Light has on the corporeal Eye, it refreshes and enlivens our Spirits, and spreads a Chearfulness over every Thing around us.

The Finger of the Almighty seems visible in this, pointing out unto us the Employment whereunto we ought principally to devote ourselves: Inasmuch as he who hath created all Things with such a Disposition and Fitness to certain Uses and Ends, that, in following this natural Bent, they arrive at the greatest Perfection in themselves, and at the same Time are productive of the greatest Good to the Universe; but by any other Appropriation, become either useless, as incompetent to attain the ill-designed Effect, or produce something monstrous and injurious: He, I say, hath ordained *our* Frame with such an Aptitude to moral and religious Exercises, that whereas every other continued Application is attended always with something that is irksome and distasteful, often with something that is pernicious and destructive; yet so far are we from feeling any Weariness in well-doing, that moral and religious Meditations are the very Food of the Soul. Adding Virtue to Virtue is adding Strength to Strength;

Strength; the greater Acquisitions we make of this Sort, as in the Case of worldly Riches, we are enabled thereby to make still the greater. S E R M.
XIII.

One great Reason why Men do not quicken their Pace more in the Ways of Goodness, is owing to a very great Mistake in the Judgments they are apt to form of themselves by using a deceitful Standard. They are not at any Trouble to get exact Notices of Perfections and Goodness, and to examine their Lives by such truly imitable Patterns: They never consider Virtue in her native and divine Image, they only consider it as brought down to their Senses in the Lives of other People; and, through Self-partiality, are apt to imagine themselves full as good as, if not better than, they; and therefore sit down with a thorough Self-Complacency, presuming their Work is already done. Whereas Men of Sense, be they ever so good, are not vain and elate with Goodness, but rather diffident of it and themselves; and therefore they are still pressing on to higher Degrees of Piety, because they form in their Minds an Idea of Perfection. And this being the Test whereby they judge of themselves and their Actions, and finding how far the Copy falls short of the Original, they are far from being satisfied with themselves: They never think themselves good enough, but

S E R M. endeavour to make themselves as good as
XIII. they can be,

It is true, several in the lower Rank and Condition of Life have neither Leisure nor Capacity to attain to any competent Degrees of Knowledge or Learning; and therefore are not qualified to fill such Stations as allow of the Exercise of sublime, heroic, and extensive Virtues; but still a large Field is open for their Progress and Improvement. They may grow more regular in their Attendance on the sacred Ordinances; more disposed to receive Instruction from their Teachers, more industrious in their Callings, more friendly to their Neighbours, more patient under Provocations, more resigned to the Dispensations of Providence. If Men's Hearts be truly dedicated to God's Service, he will measure their Work, not by the Value it may have in itself, but by the Proportion it bears to their Abilities. In the Kingdom of Christ there is neither *Barbarian nor Scythian, neither bond nor free*; all the Distinction *there* is founded on the *inward Condition* of the Mind: True Liberty *there* is a Freedom from the Slavery of Sin; true Nobility is to excel in Virtue.

So far then ought we to be from considering this Life as a dull, confined Round of the same insignificant Trifles, that we ought to look upon it as an indefinite Line; wherein every Step we take is, or ought to be,

be, an important and valuable Advance in Goodness: An Addition to that Number of good Actions, whose Sum will render our Happiness the more exalted and complete. It will carry us on till we become here on Earth a little lower than the Angels; and, by a natural and easy Transition, shall be made equal to them in Heaven: Which leads me,

SERM.
XIII.

Illy, To offer some Reasons and Considerations to engage us in such a Practice. And,

1st, Let it be considered, that this progressive State is our *Duty*. And in this View we may observe, that the Scriptures have not determined what precise Quantity of Goodness, neither more nor less, will intitle us to the Favour of God; and, by that, to the *Inheritance that fadeth not away*: It being their Design to make Men not just so far virtuous, and no farther; but to make them as virtuous and pious as possible. Accordingly we are commanded to *grow in Grace, to go on to Perfection, to be perfect, even as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect; to be holy, as He is holy; merciful, as He is merciful*. The Degrees indeed of these Perfections we shall never be able fully to reach, nor is it the Intention of the Command that we should: But it is in our Power to make a constant

S E R M.
XIII.

and continued Progress in the *Kinds* of these Perfections; and thence arises our Obligation to advance in the *Degrees* as far as the Sum of our Faculties, exercised and improved to the utmost, can carry us. For ridiculous and intolerable would be the Pretence, that, because the Distance of any Point is infinite, therefore it is not in our Power to make any Approaches towards it. Truth, Justice, Mercy, Goodness, and Holiness are essentially and eternally the same in their own Nature. And since God hath been pleased to create us in his own Image, by enduing us with Reason, and thereby making us capable of exercising these his own Attributes, which, in a lower Degree, he hath graciously communicated to us; so by our diligent Improvement in them, by beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of the Lord, we are renewed more intimately into that Image; we attain to a nearer Resemblance of his Divine Nature. The Rule is perfect, that Scope might be given to the most exalted Virtue; but the absolute Perfection of it unattainable, that *he that glorieth may glory in the Lord*. Our Condemnation will not lie in this, that we did not exactly transcribe the Original; but that we did not make the Copy so complete as was in our Power. The best Conviction and Assurance then, that we can have of truly discharging our

our Duty, is the Evidence of this Progress S E R M
XIII
in our Christian Course.

It is not uncommon indeed to hear some Men express themselves in such Terms of Indifference about their religious Conduct, as if it were the least Concern they had in the World; to hear them make a Jest of the high Strains of Piety and Goodness which they observe in others, and ludicrously, or rather profanely declare, they do not pretend to be such Saints; they should be content with the lowest Place in Heaven. Happy, no Doubt, will he be, who, by a faithful Discharge of his Duty to the utmost of his Power, shall obtain a Place in the lowest of the heavenly Mansions: But for Men, with an Air of Presumption, to pretend to cut out for themselves just such a Portion of Duty as they think will intitle them to an inestimable Reward; and, like wary Dealers, put themselves to no more Expence than what they judge will be barely necessary to purchase that Pearl to which the Kingdom of Heaven is compared: This is a *Covetousness which is Idolatry*: It is sacrificing the Riches of God's Goodness, their natural and spiritual Powers, to their own Indolence and Wantonness: It is doing a *Despight* to that *Spirit of Grace*, which otherwise might have become a reigning Principle in their Hearts, and productive of many generous and worthy

SER. M.
XIII.

thy Actions. Had he, to whom were committed *five* Talents in the Parable, gained no more than him to whom *two* only were committed, can we think he would have merited the Title of a *good and faithful Servant*? No, of a *wicked and slothful Servant*; *slothful*, in not making the most of them; *wicked*, in resolving not to make the most of them. In short, they who are blessed with the highest Powers, whether intellectual, moral, or spiritual, are under a strict Obligation to employ them in all the Offices of Goodness, and in Degrees proportionable to those Powers. The Command given by *St. Paul* to *Timothy*, concerning those who have worldly Riches: virtually extends to *them*; and under the same Penalty, the Forfeiture of their Salvation, — *Charge them, that they be rich in good Works.*

If any Man thinks himself already as virtuous and good as he needs to be; it is a certain Sign, he has not yet arrived at any Eminence in Virtue. For from thence, as from a rising Ground, the Prospect would enlarge upon him, and enable him to descry vastly-distant Tracts, to which the small Space that he had already measured bore no Proportion. Few Men will pretend to have made equal Advances with *St. Paul* towards Perfection; he being one of those Persons, that, whatever they do,
do

do it *with all their Soul, and with all their* S E R M. XIII.
Strength; yet he was far from thinking that he had finished his Work, or that he might remit any Thing of his Endeavours. On the contrary, we find him imitating the Alacrity of those who run in a Race; who do not so much consider what Quantity of Ground they have already cleared, as how much still remains, to call forth their Strength and Agility. *Not, says he, as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: But I follow after, if that I may apprehend That for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: But this one Thing I do; forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, I press towards the Mark, (or Goal) for the Prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus.* And it is remarkable, that he urges the Imitation of this his Example, not only to those of the *Philippians*, who were newly entered into the Christian Profession, and consequently can be supposed to have made but slender Improvements in it; but, *Let us, says he, as many as are perfect, be thus minded.*

We see then how much it is the Duty of the very best of us to be always improving in Goodness, and growing in Grace; to be endeavouring *after the Fulness of the Measure*

S E R M.

XIII.

Measure of our Stature in Jesus Christ; the only Stature to which we can add several Cubits by taking Thought: And we may venture to pronounce the State of that Man to be dangerous, and that he will never arrive at Heaven, who sits down, either under a lazy and affected Despondency of being able to proceed no farther; or under a vain and impious Presumption of having already gone far enough.

2. A second Consideration arises from the *Advantages* we shall reap from the progressive State. The *First* whereof is, that it will supersede the Trust and Confidence which too many are apt to repose in Repentance: Whereon, it is to be feared, a much greater Stress is laid than it will be able to bear. Indeed *Repentance*, at the first Publication of the Gospel, was required as a necessary Qualification for such of the *Gentiles* as embraced Christianity; but after they became Christians, higher Terms of Duty were pressed upon them. They were to leave Repentance as a first Principle, like as Men do the Rudiments of any Science, and enjoined to go on to Perfection. The Heathen World was sunk in such Degrees of Wickedness, that the Change to Christianity was a Kind of *moral Resurrection*. You who were dead in *Trespases and Sins* — bath be quickned. The Powers of the Mind

at

at this spiritual Birth, bore a Resemblance to the Powers of the Body at their natural Birth; and had they advanced no farther, they had still continued *Babes in Christ*. Leaving Vice is one Thing, and Improvement in Virtue, another; and nothing is more clear from the whole Tenour of the *New Testament*, than that the Lives of Christians were to be as different from the Lives of Heathens, as Light is from Darknels: And therefore we may conclude, that it never could be the Design of the Gospel, that Men should live in that ambiguous, divided, and distracted State of sinning and repenting; of being Heathens and Christians by Turns. No Doubt can be made but Christians, by the Help of a good Education, and early Impression of Religion upon their Minds, may live free from the Habits of all Sin, and from every such single Act of it as is gross and enormous. And after Men have indulged themselves in vicious Liberties, with a View of making Repentance their Refuge; it may be questioned, whether the most sincere Repentance will not be such as they may have Reason to repent of. The Wound in their Conscience may be healed in some Sort, but it will always resemble the Case of other Wounds; where there is never such an Union and Incorporation as there was in the original Composition.

Now

S E R M.
XIII.

SERM.
XIII.

Now nothing will more effectually prevent any Danger of this Kind (and this is the least Danger that attends a Reliance on Repentance) than being actuated by those more generous Principles which accompany the progressive State. If Men form such faint Resolutions of Perseverance in their Duty, as to leave some secret Reserve for the Admission of Sin, it is more than probable they will soon have Occasion for such an Expedient; when our Actions spring from mean Motives, it is no Wonder if they are confined within narrow Limits, and conclude in inglorious Atchievements. But when the Fear of Punishment becomes but a subordinate Incentive to moral Attainments, and the Love of Virtue takes the Lead in our Inclinations; when our Duty is not performed with the heartless Thought of it's being our Duty, but when it becomes a free-will Offering, and presents itself as a Kind of Temptation to our Desires; when the Pleasure we have experienced from the Progress we have made, adds Life and Vigour to our farther Pursuits; when we are not driven forwards by the Rebukes of an evil Conscience, but led on by the Acclamation and Applause of a good one: then will the Soul be conscious of her innate Greatness and Dignity, and we shall be so far from sinking into
the

the Dregs of Vice, that, as a Philosopher S E R M.
said of his Master, we shall almost blush XIII.
to find ourselves in the Body.

And as the progressive State is the best Means for *bringing* us to a uniform and unreserved Obedience; so, which is a *second* Advantage, it is the best, if not the only Security for our *Perseverance* in it. It is not allowed us, in this unstable Condition of Things, to arrive at such a Situation as we may expect to enjoy without any farther Care or Concern. Like an Arrow shot up into the Air, if we do not continue to ascend higher in the Scale of moral and religious Duties, we shall soon descend to something below them. The Mind then is to be kept continually upon the Stretch, our Attention excited, and our Affections enlivened by divine Contemplations; our Resolutions enforced by the View of higher Advantages, our good Habits farther strengthened and confirmed by the frequent Exercise of good Actions. We are, as it were, sailing against the Wind; and if we remit any Thing of our Strength or Activity, so as not to proceed, we must of Course be driven back. The Faculties of the Mind, as well as the Members of the Body, by frequent Use, gain a Kind of mechanick Ease and Readiness; and, by Remission and Disuse, abate of that Skill

SERM.
XIII.

and Aptness in the Performance. By intermitting our Converse with Things of a spiritual Nature, we lose our Taste and Relish for them; a Sort of Indisposition is bred in the Soul, the Parent of a vitiated and depraved Appetite. And hence it comes to pass, that the Lives of most Men take their Turns, like the Sea, of an alternate Ebbing and Flowing; whereas they ought to resemble the Course of a River, which is receiving perpetual Supplies: Which, at the same Time that they augment it's Streams, add Weight to it's Flow, till it finally terminates in the Ocean.

But, farther, what is consequent upon, and crowneth all other Advantages, the progressive State is the best Testimony we can have of our being in a salvable Condition. There are some who would persuade us, that our Conversion to a regenerate State is performed in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye; and manifested by some extraordinary *Feeling, Experiance, or Impulse*. This indeed is a short Way, but the Securi-ty of it may be much questioned. High and extraordinary Pretensions, where we see no competent Foundation for them, justly alarm us with a Suspicion, that the Persons who lay Claim to them, are either themselves deceived, or design to deceive others.

others. And as we are satisfied, the Boast SERM.
XIII. of *Infallibility* in the *Romish* Church has been the Source of the grossest *Errors*; so it is not less to be feared, that these pretended infallible Signs of *Conversion* may tend to the *Perversion* of many weak, though sincere Christians. For as it is not possible to communicate the Manner of these sensible, internal Operations, any more than it is to make one Man feel for another; a *Criterion* will be wanted, whereby to judge whether they are Impressions of the Spirit of God, or are occasioned by the Workings of a warm and disturbed Imagination. Here then we are beset with a double Danger; on one Hand we may fancy ourselves to have those Symptoms of a salvable State when we have them not, and so may be easily betrayed into a fatal Security; on the other, though our Condition might in itself be full of Hope, yet, for Want of these significant Emotions, we might be thrown into the utmost Despair. But a Man can never be mistaken in the Survey of such Actions as being laid in the Principles of sound Reason, are conducted by the Rule, and supported by the Faith of the Gospel: Whose Number are measured by all the Opportunities we have or can find, and whose intrinsick Excellency means to imitate the Perfection of the

Y Divine

SERM.
XIII.

Divine Actions themselves. But it is Time to proceed to the

III. *Third* Thing I proposed, which was to make a Reflection or two relating to the Subject. And,

1st, From what has been said it appears how groundless and unreasonable all those Complaints are, which we hear so often repeated concerning human Life; that it is an insignificant, capricious, and wayward State; by some looked upon as a Comedy, by others as a Tragedy, and by many as an odd Mixture of both. For, in Truth, all this proceeds from the false Judgment of those who consider it not as *Means* to an End, but as an *End* itself; and so expect to reap that Satisfaction from it, which it was never designed to give. Let us but once correct this Mistake, and direct the Scope of all our Actions to the Attainment of Happiness hereafter, and a great Share of Happiness will, of Course, fall in our Way, without our looking for it. But, by this strange Perversion of the Order of Things, we take a sure Method of being disappointed in our Expectations of Happiness both here and hereafter. The Means not being employed to their proper End, become useless in that Respect: And by being confi-

dered as an End, we act according to that S E R M. XIII.
preposterous Conclusion, and thereby involve and embarrass ourselves in inextricable Difficulties. And hence it comes to pass, that so many are sick of themselves, and look upon Life as tedious, distasteful, and nauseous; and are inclined to quarrel with the Dispensations of Providence for not making them more perfect than they are. Whereas were their Nature by many Degrees more perfect, by thus misapplying the Powers of it, their Unhappiness would be still the greater: For the nobler we suppose the Faculties of the Soul, the less satisfying would every Thing in this World be found. In short, take away the Notion of a future State, and you leave nothing substantial in the present, except Misery: Allow a future State it's due Weight, and nothing in this Life will seem useless or impertinent: You add many substantial Blessings; the Afflictions of Life will point out their own Remedy; and you will remove what is most miserable in Misery itself: And the less perfect you are, the more inclined will you be to adore the Goodness of God, who hath appointed such an inestimable Reward for such imperfect Services as your's are, or can be.

2dly, If we are persuaded of the Truth of the Doctrine that has been advanced,

S E R M.
XIII.

what shall we think of the State of those Men, who are pursuing a Course of Life in direct Opposition to it ; who instead of daily proceeding in all Virtue and Godliness are daily adding to the Number and Malignity of their Sins ? What can we think indeed, but that it *had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them.* Let their Danger suggest to us the Means of our own Security : And let us not entertain a mean Opinion of the Power which Christianity has to reform the World, from the small Effects that we find it has on the Minds of but too many. The best Religion that God can give unto Man is not designed, nor can it be designed, to over-rule his Will ; but to impower him to give it a right Direction. Let us consider what our Religion *can* do by what we know in Fact it *has* done. It was the high Commendation of an exemplary *Roman*, that while he lived in the very Dregs and Corruption of his own Republick, he formed his Manners by the Model of one that was accounted the most perfect : Let it be our's to keep continually in our Eye the Pattern which the primitive Christians have left us ; and, by copying after it, approve ourselves blameless and harmless, *the*

Sons

Sons of God without Rebuke in the midst of SERM.
a perverse Nation, among whom let us shine XIII.
as Lights in the World.

Lastly, We may observe, it has pleased our Creator to constitute our Frame in such a Manner, that we advance gradually to the perfect Use of Reason : A Faculty whose Increase we are for a long Time as insensible of, as we are of the Increase of our Stature. We have likewise very good Arguments to persuade us, that the Soul in a future State will not stop short at any certain Period of Happiness; but that she will continually enlarge her intellectual Powers, and augment her Capacities; purify her Desires, and inflame her Affections; receive new Accessions of Bliss and Glory, and thereby make perpetual Approaches towards the Fountain of all Perfection. In this, we may well presume, will consist the Happiness of those faithful Servants, who shall be found to have done their Master's Will here on Earth. And a more pleasing Consideration cannot offer itself to the Mind of Man. Ought we not therefore to conclude, that during the intermediate Interval, in order to render the Whole of our Existence of a Piece, the Soul, by Parity of Reason, should preserve the same Tenor of Improvement? Let us then consider how far we are advanced in the

SERM.
XIII.

Path of Life, and how far we have made it the *Path of the Just*. Let us cultivate all our moral Faculties to such Degrees as to render them worthy to be accompanied by divine Grace. Let us endeavour to preserve such an uniform Obedience in our Lives, that they may know no Variety but in their Increase towards Perfection: And, as we are daily growing nearer to Eternity, God grant that we may be more and more prepared for a blessed Eternity!

SERMON XIV.

National Wickedness in Danger of
provoking National Judgments.

Preached in the Time of the late Rebellion.

ISAIAH v. 4, 5.

*What could have been done more for my
Vineyard, that I have not done in it?*

*Wherefore when I looked for Grapes,
brought it forth wild Grapes?*

*And now, go to; I will tell you what I
will do to my Vineyard: I will take
away the Hedge thereof, and it shall be
eaten up; and break down the Wall
thereof, and it shall be troden down.*

IN this beautiful Parable God, under ^{SERM.}
the Image of a Vineyard, sets before ^{XIV.}
the Jews, his chosen People the many and
great spiritual Blessings he had conferred
upon them; as great a Measure of
Grace as the Divine Goodness itself (in
Concert and Harmony with eternal Recti-

SERM.
XIV.

tude and Justice) could bestow; could bestow, I mean, for the Probation of such rational Beings as should be in their Circumstances—*What could have been done more to my Vineyard that I have not done in it?* He goes on to represent their ungrateful Returns, in the Abuse of those Blessings; and asks, in the Way of human Astonishment — *Wherefore when I looked, that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes?* But, in Proportion to the Greatness of the Mercy slighted, will the Severity of Justice be inflicted: In Consequence therefore of their neglecting and despising God's gracious Overtures of making them *a peculiar Treasure to himself above all People*, in Consequence of their Impiety heightened by every Circumstance of Ingratitude, he threatens them with an utter Extirpation — *I will take away the Hedge of my Vineyard, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the Wall thereof, and it shall be troden down.*

The Occasion of the present Solemnity will suggest to you my Design of applying this Parable to the Circumstances of our own Nation; and, agreeably thereto, I shall consider,

1st, What God hath done for us, and what Returns we have made.

Illy,

2dly, What we may expect as the SERM. XIV.
Consequence of our Ingratitude and Im-
piety.

3dly, The proper Means to avert and
remove God's Displeasure.

1st, I am to consider what God hath
done for us, and what Returns we have
made.

In early Ages, when we were over-run
with Heathenism and Idolatry, it pleased
God to plant the Christian Religion among
us: A Religion every Way worthy of the
Divine Dispensation, and suited to the Exi-
gencies of Mankind. A Religion the most
heavenly the World was ever blessed with;
and blessing all the Kingdoms wherein it
should be received with the greatest Hap-
piness, national, social and personal:
Containing every Motive to Goodness
which can be suggested: Our Sins are for-
given upon a sincere and unfeigned Re-
pentance; and our Pardon sealed with the
Blood of a gracious Redeemer. To a
Perseverance in the Paths of Virtue we
are allured by Precepts of the purest Mo-
rality, exhorted by the Promise of divine
Grace, and encouraged by the Reward of
an eternal Crown of Glory.

When this Religion had flourished many
Centuries in it's native and unallayed Pu-
rity,

SER. M.
XIV.

rity, in a very dark and unlearned Age it became adulterated with impure Doctrines, and quite over-grown with a Heap of monstrous Absurdities : But it pleased God, by the Ministry of his faithful Servants, to re-enlighten this Land with the Beams of Truth ; to restore Christianity to it's original Simplicity and Sincerity.

Then was the Key of Knowledge, which had been long taken away, again recovered into our Hands ; which, at the same Time that it unlocked the sacred Truths of the Scripture, laid open the mysterious Iniquity of *Popery* ; and helped us to discover, that the Boast of Infallibility tended to nothing better than to introduce the grossest Ignorance, and to make Error incurable. At the breaking in of this Light, the evil Spirit of *Popery* departed ; and we were freed from those Chains in which we had been fast bound for many Generations. Then had we the Happiness to see the Church, which, by *Romish* Artifices, had been made to encroach upon the just Rights of the civil Government, become the most friendly and favourable to it. Our Reformation from *Popery* was conducted by such peaceable, discreet, and deliberate Steps, and in so strict a Conformity to primitive Usages, that the Plan of it was the Envy of *foreign* Nations ; unhappy only in this, that it was not copied by

by every Part of *our* own. This, how-
 ever, served to convince us, that the mu-
 tual Interests of our Church and State are
 laid so truly upon the same Foundation,
 that Both must rise and fall together. This
 we found in the Course of a few succeed-
 ing Years, by an Experience but too dearly-
 bought; when the Evil Spirit of Rebellion
 could not compleat it's Conquest without
 lifting Enthusiasm into it's Train; and
 when, by their combined Forces, they
 compassed the Destruction of both the
 Ecclesiastical and civil Polity. But this gave
 Occasion for a fresh Instance of God's Lov-
 ing-kindness towards us; when so wonder-
 ful was the Deliverance that he wrought
 for us, so much beyond all human Fore-
 sight, Expectation, or Hope, that in the
 Accomplishment of it *we were like unto*
those that dream. Good Reason had we to
 rejoice; good Reason have we still to re-
 joice for the great Things that the Lord
 then did for us.

S E R M.
XIV.

Again were restless and repeated At-
 tempts made to re-establish Popery; again
 the Hand of the Almighty seasonably in-
 terposed, and defeated the almost-accom-
 plished Designs of the *Romish* Emissaries.
 This last Deliverance was wrought for us
 at the memorable *Æra* of the *Revolution*;
 an *Æra* never to be forgotten by any
 Member

SER. H. Member of the Church of *England* that
 XIV. thinks and acts consistently.

And now we have a Religion which displays itself in all the Beauty of Holiness. The Worship of God, in Conformity to the Spirit of Christianity, is manly, solemn, and majestick, without any Thing of theatrical Pomp and Pageantry: Plain and simple, without any Thing mean, indecent, or irreverent: Prayers level to the lowest Understanding, yet fit to warm and inspirit the Devotions of the highest: Affectionate and fervent, without any overstrained Flights: Composed and rational, without any Thing flat, dead, or low. Christianity, as established in the Church of *England*, I speak the Sentiments of my Heart, is the best fitted in the World to make it's Professors rationally, soberly, and substantially religious: Free from the wild Ravings of Enthusiasm, on the one Hand; and the Worship of dumb Idols, on the other: On this Side, from the Crudities of unpremeditated, extemporary Effusions; on that, from the senseless and absurd Practice of praying in an unknown Tongue. In short, every Thing is *reformed* among us, but, what wants very much to be *reformed*, our Manners. A Truth we should be ashamed to own; yet cannot deny, if we consider what Returns we have made for the many signal Blessings we have received.

ceived. For what indeed are those Returns? S E R M.
XIV.
A thorough Disregard to Christianity has prevailed, not only among the Great (for so Men in high Stations, however little in themselves, will be called) but, by the Prevalence of their Example, it has descended even to the lower Sort: Among whom there are many who pretend to be staunch Unbelievers, and really are so, if we may judge by their Lives and Conversation. It is true, Christianity is not now under such a State of Persecution as it was under the *Roman* Emperors; yet it still undergoes one Kind of Persecution, very grievous to ingenuous Minds, that of petulant Tongues and Pens as petulant; which speak and write against it with so much Rudeness and Insolence, as if Infidelity were established by Law, and Christianity barely tolerated. And to that Degree have they succeeded, that several, who have a Regard for the *Bible* at their Heart, dare not openly avow their sacred Esteem of it, for fear of being made the standing Mark of ill-bred Ridicule: Forgetful of our Saviour's dread Sentence: *Whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my Words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall appear with his holy Angels in the Glory of his Father.*

One would think, that a Religion against which so many Reproaches have been levelled,

S E R M.
XIV.

levelled, could have little or no Evidence for the Truth of it; yet so strong is that Evidence, that one cannot reject it, without embracing monstrous Absurdities. For, to mention but one Circumstance, how incredible is it, that a small Number of poor, unlearned, and unfriended Men should go upon such an unparalleled and desperate Undertaking, as to attempt the introducing a new Institution of Religion, in Opposition to the strong Faith of their own Countrymen, whose Religion had been instituted by God himself, in Opposition to the Powers in high Places, in Opposition to all the Prejudices of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, whose Schools flourished with the most refined Philosophy and Oratory: In Spite of all worldly Interest, nay, at the Hazard of the Lives of both themselves and their Converts; how incredible, I say, is it that all this should be attempted without a thorough Conviction of Truth in themselves; how incredible it should be effected without the Power of Miracles to convince others? In short, whatever Objections are raised against Christianity, I will venture to say, that as strong and formidable ones may be raised against those Branches of Knowledge, which admit of the greatest Certainty.

And though a Disbelief of the Gospel be destitute of all Evidence, Reason, or
Proof,

Proof, whence it is a Matter of Surprize, S E R M.
XIV.
that any thoughtful Man can be an Unbeliever; yet so far has *Deism* spread through every Rank and Order of Men, as if all the Evidence in the World were on that Side, and none at all on the other. And, by the Presumption of their Strength, to such a Height of Impiety have the Enemies of our holy Religion dared to proceed, as to ridicule the historical Narrations of the Scriptures, our Creeds, and other devotional Parts of our publick Service by the most profane Parodies; nay, to *blaspheme that holy Name by which they are called*. Those who dare not, nor is it fit they should, vent their Reproaches against a crowned Head, have yet dared to shoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words against him, who is far superior to all Kings, to Angels and Archangels — *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. Have any of the Nations among the Heathen vilified their Gods, which were yet no Gods, as some among us have that great Name, *which is above every Name in Heaven and Earth?*

And now we may well apply, with a little Variation, that Allegory of the *Psalmist*, which we cannot too much admire for it's inimitable Beauty, nor at the same Time too much lament, that the Application of it can be made with so great Propriety to our own Case: “O God, thou hast
“ brought

SERM.
XIV.

“ brought a Vine (the Christian Religion)
“ out of *Judæa*. Thou madest Room
“ for it, and when it had taken Root, it
“ filled the Land : The Hills were co-
“ vered with the Shadows, and the Boughs
“ thereof were like the goodly Cedars. It
“ continued in a flourishing State ; she
“ stretched out her Branches unto the
“ Sea, and her Boughs unto the River’s
“ End. Why hast thou then broken
“ down her Hedges, that they that go by
“ pluck off her Grapes ? The wild Boar
“ out of the Wood doth root it up, and
“ the wild Beasts of the Forest destroy it.
“ Turn now, O God, look down, behold,
“ and visit this Vine, and the Branch that
“ thou madest so strong for thyself ; but
“ it is now ready to be cut down.” In
plain and unfigurative Words, the Light of
Christianity seems to stand quivering on a
Point, ready to be extinguished, and to
leave us, as it first found us, bewildered in
Paganism, *in Darknes, and in the Shadow
of Death.*

We are not to expect, if the Christian
Religion, and it’s divine Author, be thus
contemned and vilified, that the Servants
of that Lord, and the Ministers of that
Religion, should meet with better Treat-
ment. *If they have called the Master of
the House Beelzebub ; how much more shall
they call those of his Household ?* While we
were

were in imminent Danger of Popery, what a serious Sense of Religion overspread the Nation? At that great Crisis how were our Churches crowded, and their Altars frequented? How were they who officiated at those Altars respected for their immortal Services against Popery, by their unanswerable Confutations of it, by making the first and firmest Stand against it? But no sooner was the Danger over, by the late happy Revolution, than we relapsed, like *Pharaoh*, who hardened his Heart as soon as the Storm of Hail was over, into Irreligion, Profaneness, and an avowed Disregard to all fixed Principles; and basely attacked that Order of Men, who, undismayed and unterrified, had stood in the Front of the Battle, and vanquished all their Adversaries. Then those very Persons, some of whom had put on the Disguise of Popery, and others skulked in Corners, and continued silent (without one Word of their favourite Topicks, *Persecution* and *Priestcraft*) threw off the Mask, and came forth from their Coverts, where they had lain hid, and raised loud Outcries against the Clergy; though they, of all Men, have the least Reason to exclaim against the Reformed Priesthood. For to whom do they more owe that Liberty of Speech and Writing, which they have abused to so great Licentiousness, than to that very Body of Men, some of

Z

whom

S E R M.
XIV.

whom purchased it for them at the Hazard of their Lives ; who rescued us from the Yoke of Popery by disputing, writing, and dying for *Protestantism* ; who gave their Bodies to be burnt for beautiful Liberty ? And is this their Gratitude, to be continually levelling their Invectives against those of that very Function to whom they are indebted, that they dare freely write or speak at all ? For, had it not been for Them, they might have been groaning underneath the Tyranny of Popery, and perhaps under the Tortures of the Inquisition.

Now though the Propagators of these Principles pretend, that the goodly End they have in View is to root out, from the Minds of Men, inveterate Prejudices, Bigotry, and Superstition ; and thereby to favour the Cause, and promote the Growth, of moral Virtue ; yet we do not hear that they have boasted of any Reformation which their Tenets have produced in the Lives of their Profelytes : That either publick or private Virtues have flourished more in the Nation since their Interposal in religious Instruction : That the Love of our Country has more eminently distinguished itself in projecting more benevolent and disinterested Schemes for the Good of the Publick ; that we see more of Justice, Temperance, and Chastity ; and less of Luxury, Venality, Corruption, and Perjury. The Truth is,
we

we are not left to guess whether the contrary Effects may not have been wrought; they are, I doubt, too clearly seen, too sensibly felt. Many Vices that used to be looked upon with Horror and Amazement, are now become so common, that they are not regarded; or, if regarded, serve only to promote Jest, or Sport, or Laughter. Gravity, Seriousness, and Authority no more appear in the Demeanour of Parents; nor Modesty, Reverence, and dutiful Regard in the Behaviour of Children. Instead of assembling in the House of God to sanctify the Sabbath by Prayer and Thanksgiving, we hear of the Profanation of that holy Day in *Assemblies* of another Sort. In short, so degenerate and dissolute are our Manners become, that all the Religion that is left among us is little more than a just Abhorrence of Popery; and we but too much verify the Observation which Foreigners have made of us, that we are a Nation of Protestants, but not of Christians. And this brings me to consider,

S E R M.
XIV.

Idly, What we may expect as the Consequence of our Ingratitude and Impiety.

There needs no formal nor laboured Proof to demonstrate, that Vice, when diffused through a Kingdom, and in it's highest Degrees of Malignancy, must have a fatal Influence over the whole Community,

S E R M.
XIV.

nity, and at last accomplish the Destruction of it: We need but observe the Symptoms of it, as they discover themselves in the Affairs of private Persons and Families, and the Result of that Observation will determine the Point. Vice, in it's universal Progress, must be attended with Idleness and immoderate Expence; the sure Fore-runners, or rather the natural Parents, of Poverty. Poverty indeed, honest Poverty, would cast about for honest and unthought of Expedients for supporting it's self, and bettering it's Condition; but Poverty, contracted by the profligate Courses of Drunkenness, Lewdness, and Debauchery, takes quite another Turn, and preys upon the little Industry that is left in the Nation, and thereby gives a Check to that very Industry: For the less secure Men grow in their Properties, the less will they labour to improve them. Hence will it come to pass, that, among those of higher Condition, Self-interest will be made the ruling Principle; which will be ready on all Occasions to sacrifice the Good of the Community to it's own sordid Gratifications. And, among the meanest of the People, what Power, can we suppose, will the Voice of human Laws have against the louder Calls of Poverty, set free from the Barrier of Conscience; and thereby at Liberty

Liberty to relieve itself by all the Methods that Wickedness can suggest? What are the Terrors of Death (an Expedient too that every wise Nation would, if possible, prevent) to those who have no farther Apprehensions of it, but that it puts an End to all their Miseries? And is it not true in Fact, that Rapine, Theft, and Murder have, in some Parts of the Land, been so supported by their several Bands, that the Arm of the civil Magistrate has been thought too weak, to curb and restrain them; and that our military Force (no very desirable Support of an *English* Constitution) has been called in to repress their Insolence and Audaciousness? In Proportion, as the Hands of the Government grow weak, will the Hearts of it's Enemies be strengthened, and greater Force must still be provided for it's Support; and the Maintenance of that must again fall on the Publick: And general Burthens of that Kind, should they ever be felt, would be followed by a general Discontent. The Spirit of Discord, at any Time the greatest Plague of a Community, will rage higher; more bold Steps must be taken to support a sinking Government, which will, on the other Hand, be more boldly controverted and controlled. And this will give a great Temptation to our foreign Enemies to take the Advantage of such fatal Opportunities,

S E R M.
XIV;

S E R M. and try to make us no more a Nation.

XIV.

And what fairer Opportunity can they expect or desire, than to find the Nation, whose Conquest they are meditating, divided in it's Counsels, depressed in it's Courage by Idleness and Debauchery, and distressed by Poverty?

Nor will the Ecclesiastical Part of our Constitution be less in Danger from unsettled Principles, and from a general Dissolution of Manners: For *Scepticism* and *Infallibility* approach close to one another, like the extreme Points of East and West: And however the thoughtful Part of the Nation may abhor Popery for it's numerous Absurdities, the humane and good-natured for it's numerous Cruelties and Massacres; yet the profligate and debauched will be inclined to think more favourably of it for it's large Indulgences to, and Encouragements of, Immorality.

In the ordinary Course of Things then we see, that Vice, when it becomes epidemical, is not only the Reproach, but bids fair for the Ruin of any People.

But this is not all — when God's ordinary Methods of Reforming are lost upon us, he will have Recourse to some extraordinary Means; to some more awakening Notices of his Displeasure. National Wickedness never failed, sooner or later, to provoke the Almighty to a national Vengeance; and

and this is deferred, sometimes, for no other Reason but that terrible one, of making the Execution more severe. Indeed we may have Reason to fear God's Judgments are already gone out. One half of this united Kingdom is, at this Juncture, by the bold Invaders of our Liberties, made a Scene of Devastation, Rapine, and Slaughter; and so likewise is a considerable Part of the other: The Land before them being, in the Words of the Prophet, *like the Garden of Eden, and behind them a desolate Wilderness*. But should it please the Almighty to defeat the Designs of a desperate Set of Men, engaged in a desperate, as well as unrighteous Cause; should he send this Punishment in his Mercy, yet perhaps it may be the last Trial of his Mercy; and if we are not taught by it to learn Righteousness, our Iniquity will draw down Ruin upon us in some other Shape, or from some other Quarter. For national Impiety is an Affront that strikes more directly at Heaven, and which Heaven therefore is more nearly concerned to punish in a national Way; Such an Impiety, especially, as this Nation is guilty of, the only one of all Nations upon Earth, where Religion is established in the greatest Purity, and yet treated with the greatest Contempt. While Religion maintains but so much Ground as to command an outward Reverence and Respect, some Hopes

S E R M.
XIV.

S E R M.
XIV.

would be left, that it might in Time recover it's Authority, and recommend itself to our inward Esteem : But when it has lost all Hold upon us, when we do not only neglect it in Practice, but deride it in Principle, nothing is left but that God should awaken us to a Sense of his Being and Providence, by some such extraordinary Judgment as *will make his Power to be known.* — Which brings me to consider,

III^{dly}, The proper Means whereby we may hope to avert God's Displeasure.

And wherewithal shall a People laden with Iniquity appear before the Lord to turn away his Wrath, and to arrest the Hand of Vengeance lifted up for their Destruction? Hear the Almighty's own gracious Declaration—*At what Instant I speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom to pluck up and to pull down, and destroy it ; if that Nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them. God's Mercy is over all his Works ;* but Nations and Kingdoms are the more peculiar Objects of his providential Care. This is not less agreeable to the Researches of Reason, than it is to the more sure Reports of the Spirit of Truth speaking in our holy Religion ; *If not a Sparrow falls to the*

the Ground without the Will of our heavenly S E R M.
XIV.
Father, how much more does his Providence watch over Man, who is *of more Value than many Sparrows*? How much more still over those larger Communities, in whose Calamities the most faithful and best of his Servants must be involved? But how much farther can we expect his Mercy should extend than this, that even when their Reformation is so far despaired of, that he has denounced Judgment against them; yet he is willing to reverse the Sentence, on the easy Condition of their turning from the Evil? Now National Evil is the common Stock of Evil to which every Individual contributes his Share. As we then make a Part of the Nation, our Sins must make a Part of the National Guilt; and consequently none of us can think ourselves unconcerned in the important Work of a National Reformation. In vain would we endeavour to remove the Burthen from ourselves by pretending, our Betters are as bad or worse than we are; since we do not know how far the Consequences of any one Vice may increase the Measure of that Iniquity from which, when it is filled up, we can expect nothing less than a final Destruction.

We have, I trust, not more out of a proper Regard to publick Authority, than
in

S E R M.
XIV.

in Compliance with our own pious Inclinations, prostrated ourselves before the Throne of Grace, to call down, by our Prayers, the Mercies of God upon this sinful Nation; to beseech him, that though he *should* be pleased to *chasten and correct* us; yet *that* he would not finally give us over unto Death: But let us remember, that those very Prayers, without Amendment of Life, would be an *Abomination to the Lord*: For what do we pray for, but that God would be pleased to accept our sincere Repentance? And how can that Repentance be accounted sincere, that does not produce a Reformation of our Manners?

Our Sins are the greatest Enemies that we have to fear; even Rebellion, unless the Sword should receive a judicial Commission from God, is not so much to be dreaded. Rebellion is like a Hurricane; which, however big with formidable Evils, is often of no long Duration, but Things settle again into Order and Regularity: It alarms the Nation, and puts every well-affected Person upon making a resolute Stand against it. But Irreligion paves the Way for such a Train of Vices as by Degrees sap and undermine the whole Constitution. Though it works our Ruin in a slower, yet it is in a surer Way. If the one be like a raging Fever in the Body, the other is like a slow, lingering

lingering Consumption; a flattering but a fatal Distemper, making us think all is well, when we are every Day making nearer Approaches to our Diffolution. S E R M.
XIV.

Let us then return to those Principles from which there has been a most dreadful Falling-off. *Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith*, and in it the *well-grounded Hope of a blessed Immortality through Jesus Christ*. Christian Principles are the surest, I may say the sole Foundation on which a true Reverence to God can be laid. These will therefore make us the best Men, and thereby the most faithful Subjects of the King, and the truest Lovers of our Country, by speaking most home to our Conscience.

And for our Encouragement in the Exercise of true Piety, and an unspotted Innocence of Life, let us remember, that hereby we shall not only secure our own Salvation, and by our good Example set forward the Salvation of others, but may likewise be found of the Number of those few Persons, for whose Sake it may please the Almighty to spare the whole Nation. Virtue does not receive a Value from, but gives a true Value to Greatness: And however it may be placed more commodiously for Observation among those of Distinction; yet in the Sight of God it is of as great Value among those of lower

S E R M. lower Condition. *God is no Respector of*
 XIV. *Persons.*

It was said by a Monarch, who was a Papist in Disguise, that he owned the Reformed Religion was much better than the Popish; but those of that Communion seemed to be in earnest about their Religion; but we seemed to be in jest about our's. How far they may be in earnest about their's, I know not: But that we too many of us seem to be in jest about our's is, I doubt, too true. Let us remove this Reproach by a constant Attendance on each religious Duty in the publick Assembly, in our Families, and in our Closet: And let the Purity of our Church's Doctrines appear in the Purity of our Lives: And God grant that the holy Scriptures may recover their deserved Esteem among us, that we may so attend to the Voice of God speaking to us by his Prophets, the Apostles, and his Son Jesus Christ, that all the *People may hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously!*

SERMON XV.

The Happiness of the GOOD in
a Future State.

Preached in TWICKENHAM-CHAPEL the
Sunday after Dr. WATERLAND's
Interment.

MATTHEW XXV. 21.

Well done, thou good and faithful Servant; Thou hast been faithful over a few Things, I will make thee Ruler over many Things: enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.

BY the good and faithful Servant in ^{SERM.}
this Text, is meant one, that has ^{XV.}
improved the Talents, which were entrusted
with him, to the Advancement of Religion,
and the Good of Mankind: By being
*Ruler over many Things, and entering into
the Joy of his Lord*, is shadowed out the
future Happiness of those, who have
discharged their Duty faithfully.

I have

SERM.
XV.

I have made Choice of these Words, with a Design to draw the Character of a very *faithful Servant*, the late worthy Minister of this Parish, and Archdeacon of this County; after I have, in the first Place, briefly described the Joys of Heaven, and the Nature of that Happiness which our Saviour has, by his Revelation, displayed; and, by his Merits, ensured to us.

Some Philosophers and Divines of the first Distinction have imagined the Soul to have several Faculties, which, though she cannot now display them, while her Operations are clogged and encumbered by Matter, will shoot out and exert themselves, as soon as she is divorced from this gross corruptible Body.

But, however this be; whether some Faculties are originally vested in the Mind, which are to be hereafter new Inlets of Pleasure; or whether God will superadd new Capacities to it; it is undoubtedly certain, that our Bliss will be as great, as our enlarged Soul, the Subject of it, can then receive; and greater than our narrow Understanding can at present comprehend.

The chief Ingredients of our future Happiness we may, however, proceed to mark out, *viz.*

I. The Perfections of Soul and Body.

II. The

II. The blessed Society and the Place.

S E R M.

XV.

III. The enjoyment of the Godhead.

As to the first,

If in this World, when the Soul must have a grosser Way of thinking, as immersed in the Dregs of Matter, a well-regulated Mind, and an enlarged Understanding, are yet considerable Springs of Pleasure; with what exquisite Joy will they affect us, when we shall throw off this dull Mortality, when our Bodies shall be fashioned in the glorious Likeness of our Redeemer's, and our Souls transformed into the Image of our Creator? *Now we see through a Glass darkly; but then (in a future State) Face to Face. Now I know in Part, says St. Paul, but then I shall know, even as I am known.*

If Knowledge appears so very beautiful, when we find it so difficult of Access, and when we only see some broken Sketches and imperfect Outlines of Truth; how much superior Lustre must it needs display, when it shines forth in its largest Dimensions and in its full Proportion? Shall we, who hardly guess aright, at Things before us, who, if there were not another Life, might justly complain with the Philosopher, that Nature has given indeed a very large Scope to our Curiosity, but set
very

S E R M. very narrow Bounds to our Knowledge;
 XV. shall we, I say, *in God's Light, see Light,*
 nay, even *see God as he is*, or have direct
 and immediate Ideas of him, as he is in
 his own Nature; whereas we now derive
 all our Knowledge from the Sources of
 Sensation and Reflection?

Here the Body is not able to keep pace
 with the Soul in its Inquiries; it clogs the
 native Energy of our Thoughts: But, when
 our glorified Souls shall act in glorified
 Bodies, they will be ever on the Wing,
 without ever flagging, or exhausting their
 Vigour.

We may farther suppose, when the Soul
 shall have survived Millions of Years amidst
 these pure and unsullied Joys, with what
 unspeakable Pleasure the Memory shall
 look backward over that wild Field of
 Bliss, which we have already past; and
 the Imagination with much greater Trans-
 port, may look forward to that Endless
 Ocean of Delight yet to come; still press
 onward, and still find nothing to terminate
 its Views. In vain our Mind widens to
 take in the vast Idea of an everlasting Hap-
 piness: In vain it adds Thousands to Thou-
 sands, and Millions to Millions: Our
 Thoughts are lost in Eternity.

Were it not that this Life is the Founda-
 tion of our future Happiness, who knows
 but that in the unbounded Extent of Eter-
 nity,

nity, at some far distant Period of Duration, SERM.
XV.
 our Thoughts being engrossed by an infinite Variety of nobler Objects, except our Memory be very tenacious, we may forget, or at least not think it worth our attending to, that ever there was such an Island as this, in which we live; such an Earth, as contained this Island; or such a Sun as enlightened this Earth? The Idea, how great soever, may, in such an undetermined Process of Duration, be neglected, and give Place to nobler Guests, which will supply its Room. When *that which is perfect shall come, and that which is imperfect, be done away*; the Eye of the Understanding may then command a most spacious Prospect, may trace the Oeconomy of God's Providence from the first Birth of Time to it's last Period, and survey the whole Theatre of Nature; and then, from this Light of the Understanding, what Heat of Devotion will arise! And how apt shall we be to cry out, as to the Workmanship of the Creation, *Great and marvellous are thy Works, Lord God Almighty!* And, as to the Conduct of his Providence, *Just and true are thy Ways, thou King of Saints!* ever adoring that Being, who is too great to be worthily praised, too good not to accept of our unworthy Praises.

And as our Happiness will consist in the Perfections of Soul and Body; so will it,

A a

II. In

II. In the blessed Society and Place.

A Heathen who, in other Places, expresses himself very diffidently about a future State, yet breaks out into this triumphant Exclamation: "O glorious Day, says he, when I shall depart from this Crowd of Men on Earth, this Sink of Pollution; and be admitted into the Assembly of divine Spirits!" Our Author means those exalted Persons, who had done an Honour to human Nature, and, by their virtuous and noble Actions, left behind them a bright and lasting Track of Glory. This is undoubtedly an enlarged Reach of Thought. But how much more does that Religion draw back the Veil, and display to our View a brighter Scene, which tells us, that we shall hereafter reside with the *Spirits of just Men made perfect, with an innumerable Company of Angels, with Jesus, the Mediator of a better Covenant, and with God, the Judge of All? Father, saith our Saviour, I will that those, that thou hast given me, may be with me, that they may behold my Glory.*

When once the Soul is thus upon the Wing, when once it soars upwards, how do the Glories of the World lessen to our View! Who, when he thinks of these Things, does not despise the little Greatness here below, and pity the little Men,
who

who can be so low-thoughted, as to be restless in the Pursuit, or elate with the Possession of worldly Honour? What would this solemn Pageantry of Grandeur be to him, who could have a direct and immediate Converse in Heaven, with that infinite Being, who is his Father, and those ennobled Spirits, who are to be his Brethren and Associates for ever and ever?

S E R M.
X V.

Those who want to be resolved whether we shall know one another in a future State, may consider, that God's Justice in punishing or rewarding, will appear the more by our Knowledge of the Persons who are rewarded or punished; since Crimes admit of several Alleviations or Aggravations from personal Circumstances; insomuch that it is a known Saying, that when two Persons do the same Thing, yet it shall not be the same, by Reason of the different Circumstances of the Offenders. They may reflect that the rich Man and *Abraham* know one another in the Parable, that the Apostles knew *Moses* and *Elias* on the Mount.

But however that be, to live amidst this august Assembly of Spirits in an uninterrupted Circulation of mutual Endearments, while the Light of our Joy grows greater by mingling with another's Flame, and the Beams are redoubled by Reflection; to join with this awful Congregation of Men and Angels in one great Chorus to our Maker;

S E R M.
XV.

to receive from the Throne of Glory continual Emanations of Joy, and to send up to it continual Incense of Praise ; this is what the Gospel promises ; and this is the Height of Bliss ; if we include the

III^d Thing, in which our Happiness will consist, *viz.* the Enjoyment of the Godhead.

And this I take for granted, will compleat our Felicity. It is plain, that our Desires are infinite. For, if they are fixed on any finite Object, how great soever, they may still grasp at a greater. And, if our Desires are infinite, nothing can fully and adequately satisfy them, but an infinite Good, and an inexhaustible Source of Delight.

Suppose a Man in some Retirement, all secular Business discontinued, all Solicitation of outward Objects shut out ; while Reason seated, as it were, on the Throne commands a Silence to the Passions : In this State of solemn Thoughtfulness and undisturbed Contemplation, when the Soul would be the ablest to form a true Estimate of her Condition, would he find himself sufficient for his own Happiness ? No ; in a State of solemn Thoughtfulness, in the Multitude of Thoughts, which we have within us, the divine *Comforts* can alone *refresh the Soul*. A Person, who, not content

tent with superficial Notions, sees with a S E R M. X V.
 piercing Eye Things naked and undisguised, as they are in themselves, according to their intrinsic Worth, and not as they are set off by the Heightenings and Colourings of the Imagination; thinks too deeply to be pleased with many Things, too deeply not to see the Littleness of almost every Thing but God, but what procures his Favour. Take away Religion, or the Relation between God and Man; and you leave nothing great, in which Man is interested. So true it is, that Irreligion can be built upon nothing, but the Ruins of every thing, that is great, noble, and valuable in human Nature.

On the other hand, it is a vulgar Error to imagine, that Men of gay, volatile, and unbalanced Minds are the most happy. No; their Happiness must be very unsteady, because the Soul, which is the Subject of it, is so unsteady and light. *They are carried up to the Heaven, and down again to the Deep.* They have sudden Starts of Joy, which are succeeded by as sudden a Flagging of the Spirits. True, consistent, unruffled Happiness, consists in a collected Way of thinking, in an even and composed Turn of Mind, in a regular Scheme of Action, and in employing our Love and Gratitude, the best of our Affections, upon God, the best of Beings: To which must be added a Freedom from Disasters, Pain and Mi-

S E R M.
X V.
fery, from which the Deity can alone secure us ; together with those *Rivers of Pleasure* which *flow at his Right Hand for evermore*, and from thence descend upon his Creatures.

He that is the Source of our Being must be the Source of our Well-being, of our eternal Well-being. It is the Property of the Deity alone to be blessed in himself for evermore; and it is his likewise to be able to make his Creatures blessed by and from himself. God being the sole Fountain-head of Happiness, the Streams of it must be either derived from him, or we must live in *a barren or dry Land, where no Water is.*

Unenlightened Reason could never have proved that a Being, of whose Greatness there is no End, would condescend to make an inferior Creature happy, by filling up each craving Void with substantial and unallayed Satisfaction, by making himself his Portion for ever, and bestowing upon him an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, But Revelation steps in to our Aid, and persuades us, that he who gave his Son for our Ransom, and his Holy Spirit for our Guide, will with them give us all things, or rather himself, who is all in all, for our consummate Reward. As these Scripture Expressions, *to see long Life*, and *to see good Days*, mean to enjoy long Life and good Days ; so when it is said, *without Holiness*

no Man shall see the Lord; to see him signifies to enjoy him, or to receive from him directly and immediately those Communications of his Favour, and that Fulness of Joy, which will make the Soul cry out, *This God shall be our God for ever and ever.* SERM.
XV.

If the Will and Understanding be the noblest Faculties of the Soul; if it be the greatest Happiness to have the noblest Faculties exercised upon the noblest Objects; then how great must our Happiness be, when the Will is exercised in loving him who is the sovereign Good, and the Understanding in contemplating him who is the sovereign Truth?

To conclude this Head, we shall be happy in the Perfections of Soul and Body, happy in the blessed Society and Place; and lastly, inconceivably happy in the Communication of the divine Favour, and the Light of his Countenance. Our Understandings will be enlightened with the brightest Truths, our Wills regulated with unspotted Holiness, and our Affections satisfied with the greatest Good.

Having thus described the Happiness of those in a future State, who have made a right Use of their Talents; I proceed to my IId general Head, *viz.* to draw his Character who certainly did so.

I shall begin with his Character as a Writer. No Body was more capable of
A a 4 shining

SERM.
XV.

shining as an original Writer, and striking out new and unbeaten Tracks of Thought, For he had Mr. *Locke's* Clearness of Reasoning, as well as the extensive Reading of Bishop *Stillingfleet*. He had pushed his Enquiries so far into Matters of a very high and elevated Nature, that where his Views stopt short, there was not merely the Boundary of *his* Understanding; it was the Boundary of *human* Understanding; the Point, where Knowledge ceases, and Ignorance commences. An elaborate Attempt had been made to demonstrate the Existence of God *à priori*, and that He is the *Substratum* of Space. And when the strong Man well armed with Learning and Abilities, kept his new erected metaphysical Building, his intellectual Goods were at Peace just so long——till a stronger than he arose, and stripped him of the Armour in which he trusted *.

He had thoroughly studied the Doctrine of the Trinity long before he entered into the Controversy; he sat down to the Subject

* The Substance of what he wrote upon that Subject in some Letters to a Gentleman, has been communicated to the Publick by the ingenious Mr. *Law* of *Christ-College* in *Cambridge*, partly in his excellent Notes on Archbishop *King's* *Origin of Evil*, and partly in his *Enquiry into the Ideas of Space*, etc. To which is added a *Dissertation on the Argument à priori*, by a learned Hand, viz. Dr. Waterland.

without

without any pre-conceived darling Hypo-^{SERM.}
thesis of his own advanced in Print about ^{XV.}
the Nature and Attributes of God, which
might tempt him to adjust the Scripture-
Doctrine of the Trinity, as well as he could
to it, by far-fetched Criticisms and elaborate
Comments; he viewed it, without any Biass,
in the several Lights of Scripture, Reason,
and Antiquity; he read, he weighed in the
Balance, whatever had been said against it
as well as for it; he conversed upon that
Subject with the ablest Advocate that *Ari-*
anism ever boasted, and corresponded with
another very considerable Writer on that
Side of the Question; his Determination
was not owing to any sudden Heat of Fancy,
it was the mature Result of a thorough,
honest and unwearied Examination; during
which, through too close an Application,
he greatly impaired his Health, and laid the
Foundation of that ill Habit of Body, which
at last occasioned his Death. How he was,
in a manner, forced into the Controversy,
by a Person's committing his Queries to
the Press without his Consent, or even
Knowledge; he has given the World an
Account in the Preface to the first of those
excellent Tracts, as the late Earl of *Notting-*
ham * justly styles them, which he wrote on

* See his Answer to Mr. *Whiston*, p. 19. where he
calls upon him, or any Man else, to give a just Answer
to the excellent Tracts writ by Dr. *Waterland* in
Vindication of *Christ's* Divinity.

that

SERM.
XV.

that Subject. Whereas his Adversaries had laid the main Stress of their Cause upon philosophical Subtleties and Objections; particularly, that there was no Medium for the *Catholics* between *Sabellianism* and *Tritheism*; he disarmed them of their metaphysical Artillery, turned it upon them, and made them seem willing to put the Issue of their Cause solely upon the Foot of Scripture. And let me observe, with what an ill Grace mere Smatterers in Knowledge charge the Doctrine of the Trinity with Absurdities from the abstract Nature and Reason of the Thing; when three Persons of distinguished Abilities (for with three he was at once engaged) were unable, though they did not want an hearty Inclination, to make good a Charge of that Nature.

Arguments, under his happy Direction and Management, were *Arrows* (of which his *Quiver* was full) in the Hands of a mighty Man. They carried greater Force with them, and made deeper Impressions, than when they came from a Person of the common Size: And therefore he was not ashamed when he spake with his ablest Adversary in set Conferences *. His Head was

* Some Conferences were proposed and held between him and his learned Antagonist before a very great and illustrious Person; but those Conferences were dropt after the Dr. declared his full Conviction of the Truth and Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and his Resolution to maintain it.

an immense Library, where the Treasures SERM. XV.
of Learning were ranged in such exact
Order, that, whatever himself or his Friends
wanted, he could have immediate Recourse
to, without any Embarrassment. A pro-
digious Expence of Reading, without a
Confusion of Ideas, is almost the peculiar
Characteristic of his Writings. His Works,
particularly Those upon our Saviour's *Divi-*
nity, and the *Importance of the Doctrine*,
and the *Eucharist*, into which he has digest-
ed the Learning of all preceding Ages, will,
we may venture to say, be transmitted to,
and stand the Examination of, all succeeding
ones. He has so thoroughly exhausted
every Subject that he wrote a set Treatise
upon; that it is impossible to hit upon any
thing which is not in his Writings, or to
express that more justly and clearly, which
is there.

Yet, whatever Expence of Time and
Thought he might be at in laying in
Materials, it did not cost him much Pains
to commit them to Writing. The largest
Volume *, which he has published, wrote
with great Accuracy, he, in two Months,
finished, and sent to the Press. But a
Genius is to writing well, as what good
Nature is to acting generously. It is an
Aptitude to say, as the other is to do, those

* The second Defence of his *Queries*,

SERM.
XV. great Things with Ease, Readiness and Freedom, which those, who want that Advantage, can scarce perform with much aukward Pains and Industry. Some Writers, who have made no inconsiderable Figure in the learned World, have been greatly indebted for it to the valuable Notices and Observations, with which he furnished them. But he was so disinterested, that, provided the World was instructed, he was very indifferent, who had the Honour of doing it. He had so ample a Fund of Knowledge, that he could impart it liberally, without any Danger of impoverishing himself. Meaner Proficients in Literature must husband their slender Stock more warily.

Nor was Controversy his only Talent. His Sermons, adapted to the Level of common Capacities, yet instructive to the highest, were composed with that Plainness and Simplicity, that Persons of a slender Share of Sense might be vain enough to think themselves capable of writing as well: But Men of Judgment know, that nothing is more difficult to write, than such easy Writing, as his was. Free from that obscure Diligence, which sometimes embarrasses the Writings of great Scholars, he states each Point of Duty judiciously and accurately, explains it happily, and always goes to the Bottom of his Subject.

This

This Character may be given of his S E R M. XV.
 Writings in general, that whatever Beauties of Stile some few of his latest Compositions may want; they have all of them, that to recommend them, which is more valuable than all Languages besides, the Language of the Heart. In his learned Writings he asserted nothing, but what he firmly believed; and in his plain familiar Discourses taught nothing but what he practised. He spoke and wrote with that undissembled Freedom and Openness, which ever accompanies an undesigning Honesty, and a thorough Conviction of the Truth. For it is the Property of Truth and Innocence to stand forth to view, without any studied Disguises, *naked, but not ashamed*. Whereas Falshood is generally attended with Cowardice, the Companion of Guilt; it is afraid to speak out, and poorly skulks behind a thousand little Artifices.

But this brings me, *2dly*, to give some Account of his Life and Conversation.

His Head and Heart were constantly at work upon Points worthy of him. And yet, if any Company came in, he would be immediately free and disingaged, forget the hard Student in the easy Companion, listen to any innocent Conversation, without any seeming Absence of Thought, and join in it with Life and Vivacity. I mention it, as an amazing Instance of the Liberty and Extent of
 of

SERM. of his Mind; that a Person generally intent
 XV. (too intent with regard to his Health)
 upon great Things, could at once, with a quick and sudden Transition of Thought, enter into the minute Affairs and ordinary Occurrences of Life. The Capacities of little Minds are soon filled up, and any one Point, though of no great Importance, so engrosses the whole Man, as not to leave Room for the Admittance of any Thing else. But great and enlarged Souls can take in Variety of Subjects, and have a greater Command over their Ideas, saying to one, *Go, and it goeth*; and bidding another, *Come, and it cometh*.

Though he would bear a Part in any innocent Discourse, he had an Aversion to the reigning Vices of Conversation: He was very tender of Men's Characters: He guided his Words, as well as regulated his Actions, with Discretion; and at the same Time, that his Sagacity enabled him to discover, his Charity prompted him to *cover* and conceal, *a Multitude of Faults*.

The Conversation in which he chiefly delighted, was with learned Men, who came to consult him. In which, instead of fetching a wide Compass round about the Meaning, he entered at once into the Heart of a Question, with that Quickness of Apprehension and Perspicuity of Expression, which were confessed Parts of his Character:

Character: He saw, at one Glance, where the main Stress of it lay, omitted no material Difficulties, and dwelt upon none but what were such; would not divert into By-points, but pared off all Excrescences, and never lost Sight of the main Point, till he dismissed you thoroughly satisfied about the Question, and what was indeed unquestionable, his own great Abilities: He struck Light into perplexed and uncommon Subjects; and placed even common ones in a clearer and more advantageous Point of View.

SERM.
XV.

He had an excellent Turn for Business. For his Clearness of Reasoning was not confined to learned Subjects; it extended almost to all. He would talk and write upon Things quite foreign to the common Track of his Studies, with such Penetration, that one would imagine the main Bent of them had been applied that Way. Some of his Acquaintance are living Witnesses of this, who have consulted him, and received Satisfaction from him upon very intricate Affairs, which had no Connexion with, or Relation to, Divinity.

Yet his great Abilities were so endeared by his Humanity, Affability, and Condescension, that none, I believe, ever wished them less, but those who were embarked in a Way of thinking essentially opposite to his. His Knowledge entirely filled, and therefore

SERM.
XV.

therefore did not swell or puff up his Mind. The Brightness of some People is like that of Lightning, an insufferable Brightness; his shone upon you with *healing in its Wings*; a gentle, serene, and unoffending Lustre. For though at a distance you might admire and reverence the *great* Man, yet upon a more intimate Acquaintance you could not help loving, what you plainly saw, the *good* Man, the Man of cool Wisdom and steady Piety, fixed in his Principles, but candid in his Spirit. It is the Interest of mere Pretenders to Knowledge and Greatness to affect a mysterious Gravity, and to keep their Inferiors at a Distance; the Idol is not to be seen unveiled, or in a full and open Light by its Votaries, lest they should discover its Deformity. Dr. *Waterland* was always easy of Access, his Carriage free and familiar; his Heart, and his Countenance, the Index of his Heart, open to you, without a shy and reserved Manner, without Stateliness and Solemnity; cautious, but not artful; honest, but not unguarded; glad to communicate, though not ambitious to display his great Knowledge.

He was substantially good, without studying Appearances; for those who are rich in good Works are not ostentatious of their Riches; whereas there is an ostentatious Poverty in Men of very low Degrees of Goodness, just as there is in Men in low Circum-

Circumstances, which prompts them to S E R M.
make a fair Shew, when there is no Sub- X V.
stance to support it.

He hated all Party as such, and would never have gone the Lengths of any. He never made a Sacrifice of *true* Greatness, through an eager Pursuit of what the World *calls* such. The Preferments which he had, were bestowed upon him without any Application from himself directly or indirectly; they were not the Result of his Sollicitations, much less of base and unworthy Compliances; they were the voluntary Tribute of great and good Men, for his Services to Christianity in general, and the Church of *England* in particular; nor must it be forgotten that he might have been advanced much higher, by the Recommendation and Interest of that very excellent Prelate, who in the Opinion of every true Friend to the Church, deservedly fills the highest Station in it.

He weighed a Thing long, and considered it on every Side before he formed a Resolution; but when he had once formed it, he was ever afterwards determined and unmoveable. He saw things truly, because he saw them coolly and dispassionately: whereas we see nothing, through the Mists of Passion, in its genuine Proportions. He was not one of those narrow-spirited Men, who confine all Merit within their

SERM.
XV.

own Pale; he thought candidly, and spoke advantageously of many who thought very differently from him. When any virulent Pamphlet was wrote (as scarce any Person had more wrote) against him, it did not disconcert or ruffle his Temper; he did not detest the Author as a malicious Enemy, he pitied him as an unhappy Man; he had nothing violent in his Nature, he abhorred all Thoughts of Persecution; cool and prudential Measures entirely suited his Frame of Mind; those who entertain a different Opinion of him were Strangers to him; Controversy had not at all embittered or set an Edge upon his Spirits. The meek and candid Christian was not lost in *the Disputer of this World*. I never saw him in a different Humour, no, not even in his last Illness; the same unaffected Chearfulness, the same Evenness and Sedateness, which was his distinguishing Character, appeared from the first Commencement of our Acquaintance to the last. Whatever painful Operations were thought necessary, he submitted to them without Reluctance, and underwent them with Patience and Resignation. He was very amiable in a domestic Light; though he felt great Uneasiness, he gave none, but what arose from a Fellow-feeling of his Sufferings; even then humane and benevolent to all about him, but especially to her with whom he had lived in an uninterrupted Harmony

Harmony for Twenty-one Years, bringing forth valuable Things out of the good Treasures of his Head and Heart; communicative of any Thing that was good, he would have engrossed nothing to himself—but his Sufferings,—which yet he could not engross; for every good-natured Person that saw him, could not but suffer *with* a Man, *by* and *from* whom they were to suffer nothing. The same sound Principles, from which he never swerved, and of which he never expressed the least Diffidence, which he had unanswerably defended in his Health, supported and invigorated his Spirits during his Sickness; and he died a little before his Entrance on his Fifty-eighth Year, with the same Composure with which he lived; and is now gone to offer up to God a whole Life laid out, or rather worn out in his Service. For he was like a Light in the Sanctuary, that wastes and consumes itself in *shining out before Men, that they may glorify their Father which is in Heaven.* Never weary *with well-doing*; he knew not what it was to be idle, the Time never lay upon his Hands, and therefore he was a Stranger to the Spleen, Melancholy, and imaginary Uneasinesses, which are often as vexatious as real ones. He was a remarkable Instance, that hard Study does not always sour a Man's Temper, though Idleness most certainly does, the Parent of Fretfulness,

SER.M.
XV.

Peevishness, and an Acrimony of Spirit. In Health he was always easy, because never idle; always employed in, but never encumbered with Business. He resolved Cases of Conscience, he removed Doubts and Scruples; his Assistance was often asked, and never, I believe, refused, when any useful Work of Learning was on Foot.

What chiefly endeared him was, not that he had gained a compleat Victory over *Arians* and *Socinians*: It was, that he had gained (a much nobler Conquest) a Conquest over himself. For his Reason seemed to have got the better as much over his Passions in Matters of Practice, as it had over his Imagination in Matters of Belief.

I have now paid the Debt of Gratitude, which I owed to a great and good Man of the clearest Head I ever conversed with, and, what is still more valuable, of an honest Heart; who never, through Weakness, mistook, nor through Fear, deserted, nor through Interest, betrayed the Cause of Religion. I shall always reckon it my greatest Honour, that I am, in a particular Manner, obliged to him; to whom the Christian World in general is obliged for his excellent Works; whom I revered as a Father, to whom I had Recourse as my Guide, and who received me always with that genuine Flow of Good-nature, and Openness of Soul, which distinguishes the Friend.

It

It is a melancholy Reflection, that who-
 ever dares vigorously assert, and stedfastly
 adhere to the Doctrines of the Church of
England, must expect to be branded with
 opprobrious Terms, and decried as a Bigot.
 It will be of little Avail to him, that his
 Abilities are uncommon; his Notions must
 be so too, to recommend them to the Vogue
 of the Age. As if some Men were not as
 liable to a fond Attachment, or (what is
 the same Thing) Bigotry to their own
 singular Notions, sometimes the Result of
 Pride and Vanity; as others are to the
 received fundamental Doctrines of a *Pro-*
testant Church, which have stood the Test
 of Ages, ever attacked, and ever triumphant.
 Our own particular darling Tenets, by
 which we stand distinguished from the Bulk
 of *Christians*, we look upon, as our private
 Enclosures, our private Walks, in which
 we have a Property exclusive of others, and
 which we take Care to cultivate, beautify,
 and fence in against all Invaders: The
 received Notions, however important, we
 are more indifferent to, as the common
 Field, or public Walks, which lie open to
 every Body.

At such a Juncture it cannot be improper,
 however unfashionable it may be, to bear
 my Testimony to the Merit of a Man who
 dared to think deeply and thoroughly for
 himself; though he did not think by himself.

SERM.
XV.

And give me Leave to conclude his Character by observing: That a Man must have had an exceeding good, or an exceeding bad Head and Heart, who could converse oft and long with him, without becoming wiser as to the former, and better as to the latter *.

* Having so often mentioned his Clearness of Reasoning, it may not be improper to give the following Instance of it. In the Year 1714, at the Commencement, he kept a Divinity Act for his Batchelor of Divinity's Degree. His first Question was, *Whether Arian Subscription was lawful?* A Question worthy of him, who had the *Integrity* to abhor, with a generous Scorn, all Prevarication; and the *Capacity* to see through and detect those evasive Arts, by which some would palliate their Disingenuity. When Dr. *James*, the Professor, had endeavoured to answer his *Thesis*, and embarrass the Question with the Dexterity of a Person long practised in all the Arts of a subtle Disputant; he immediately replied in an extempore Discourse of above Half an Hour long, with such an easy Flow of proper and significant Words, and such an undisturbed Presence of Mind, as if he had been reading, what he has since printed, *The Case of the Arian Subscription considered, and the Supplement to it*; he unravelled the Professor's Fallacies, reinforced his own Reasonings, and shewed himself so perfect a Master of the Language, the Subject, and himself; that all agreed, No one ever appeared to greater Advantage. There were several Members of the University of *Oxford* there, who remember the great Applauses he received, and the uncommon Satisfaction which he gave. He was happy in a first Opponent, one of the brightest Ornaments of the Church, and finest Writers of the Age, who gave full Play to his Abilities, and called forth all that Strength of Reason, of which he was Master.

He

He is now far above, as indeed he was S E R M. XV.
in his Life, the Reach of the inveterate
Malice of little Writers; and he needs not
our Praises: He has received that Praise
which is infinitely more valuable than the
united Commendations of all created
Beings, the invaluable Praise of his great
Creator; *Well done, thou good and faithful
Servant: Enter thou into the Joy of thy
Lord.* It is not in our Power to defend
Christianity, as he did, by unanswerable
Writings: But it is in our Power, and
should be in our Inclination, to adorn
it, as he did likewise, by our Lives and
Conversation.

Then in the Article of Death, when the
Soul reflects that the next important Moment
may be decisive of her eternal Happiness or
Misery, that he may, in the Twinkling of
an Eye, appear unveiled at the dread
Tribunal of Justice; when, on these
Considerations, without a great Share of
supernatural Assistance, a certain Fearfulness
is apt to come upon the best, and an horrid
Dread to overwhelm the worst; then may
we *depart in Peace*, as he did, out of this
World, with Hopes *full of a blessed Immor-*
*tal*ity in the next, through the Merits of
our Saviour. Then may we, with a vital
Sense of the Divine Goodness, bid Adieu to
all sublunary Things: Welcome Death, to
the Wicked *the King of Terrors*, but to the

S E R M.
X V.

Good the Messenger of Peace ; Welcome, Eternity ; Welcome, thou supreme Being, who, as the Source of Nature, didst create and speak us into Existence ; who, as the Source of Grace, didst make us new Creatures ; and who, as the Source of Glory, wilt advance us into Angels of Bliss and Partakers of the Divine Nature.

Then shall we be sensible, that we mis-call Things here ; and, what we stile the Day of our Death, is, in the true Estimate of Things, our great Birth-Day, our Birth-Day to eternal Life.

When the Sun shall be no more our Light by Day, neither for Brightness shall the Moon give Light unto us : But the Lord shall be unto us an everlasting Light, and our God our Glory. Our Sun shall no more go down, neither shall our Moon withdraw itself : For the Lord shall be our everlasting Light, and the Days of our Mourning shall be ended.

That we may enjoy ourselves, let us be temperate, chaste, moderate ; that we may enjoy one another, let us be benevolent, humane, charitable ; that we may enjoy God, let us be pious, devout and holy, detesting the Vices, and despising the Vanities of this World.

Now to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Might, Majesty, Dominion, Praise and Adoration, both now and for ever. Amen.

The END of the SERMONS.

THREE LETTERS
TO A
F R I E N D
ON THE
SATISFACTION OF CHRIST:

Wherein are *occasionally* considered

THE *INFINITY* OF THE DEITY,
HIS *ETERNITY*, *PRESCIENCE*, *etc.*

8
S

THE FIRST LETTER.

DEAR SIR,

YOU sum up the Force of your first Objection against the *Satisfaction* thus: “ Whatever *Distinction* there is in the “ *Divine Nature*, yet it is a *Distinction* “ which enters not into the *Essence* of that “ *Nature*. If then God the Son be *truly* “ God, and God the Son *suffered* in our “ Stead for the Sin of Man committed “ against God; then the Consequence must “ be, that *God suffered* for a Crime committed against God.” In Answer to this, *First*, Let it be observed, that God did not, *could not suffer* at all. The only Thing, that the second Person in the Blessed Trinity did, was this; by assuming our Nature, and by a *personal Union* with it, he ennobled it so far, as to make it a *meritorious* Sacrifice. The *Godhead* then did not *satisfy*, It only empowered and enabled the *Human Nature* to satisfy the *Divine*, by stamping a Value upon it. And pray where is the Absurdity of this Procedure? If you say, that the *Satisfaction* in the last Resort terminates in God; I answer, so *all* our Sufficiency and Power does too. He is the Party *pleasing*, and the Party *pleased*; since He gave and upholds

THE FIRST LETTER.

upholds every Power and Faculty that we have. It is not sufficient to reply, that *we* co-operate with God : Because, the *Human Nature* did act in *Concert* with the *Divine* in the Case now under Consideration. In short, God as well enables every One to *please* him, as he enabled Christ's *Human Nature* to *satisfy* Him.

Secondly, Let it be supposed that the *Divine Nature*, as *personalized* in Christ, satisfied the *Divine Nature* as *personalized* in the Father. You tell me, "That my Case
" of two Kings jointly reigning, One of
" which foregoing his Right makes Satis-
" faction to the Other for an Offence
" committed against Both, doth not come
" up to the Point : Because They are *two*
" *separate Beings*" (for that is your Mean-
ing) "though their *Authority* be the *same*."

Now, Sir, when we consider the *Divine Nature*, I know of no Case, that can be exactly parallel to what concerns it. Whatever Case you can imagine, it will have no Property of an exact Parallel, except it be *this* ; that the two Cases, like Parallel Lines, will never meet.

But then, either Arguments from *Human* to *Divine* are *inconclusive*, or they are *not*. If they are *inconclusive*, then you cannot infer a Contradiction in *one* Nature from what is a Contradiction in *another*, and quite different Nature, No more than a Blind Man

Man ought to conclude, that what is a Contradiction as to *Touch*, must be a Contradiction as to *Sight*. You must not infer that, since it is an Absurdity for a *Man* to satisfy *Himself*, therefore it is an Absurdity for the *Godhead*, branched out into Three Persons, to satisfy *Itself*: This being to argue *à pari*, where there is an infinite Disparity: It is the Fallacy called *Transitio à Genere ad Genus*.

But if you will contend, that Arguments *ab Humanis ad Divina* are *conclusive*, notwithstanding there must be a boundless Disproportion in all Debates concerning the *Substance* and *Personality* of the Divine Nature infinitely surpassing Human Comprehension; then I hope *my* Parallel may be intitled to the same Degree of Favour, to which *others* are, though not *exactly* corresponding.

Your Exception against the Parallel does not serve your Purpose. For though the *Substance* of the two Kings is *different*, *that* of the Trinity *one and the same*; yet I challenge you to prove, that the *Actions* of the Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity may not be as truly *distinct*, as the *Actions* of one King are from those of the Other.

If then the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are invested with a Power of *acting distinctly*; if *receding* from *personal* Right to Punishment and *making* Satisfaction, are
distinct

THE FIRST LETTER.

distinct Actions from *Insisting* upon Right and *receiving Satisfaction*; then the Son might have as truly a Power to *forego* his Right, and to *satisfy*, and the Father to *accept* of the Compensation, as in the Case of the two Kings jointly-reigning.

Either you may say, that the Three Persons are not empowered to act *distinctly*, or you will never be able to prove from the *Unity* of the Divine Substance, that the One Person might not *make*, and the other *receive*, Satisfaction; which are *distinct Actions*. To use your own Words with a little Variation; the Party *offended*, namely *One* of the *Two* Persons, forgives, out of *pure Mercy*, *His* Share of the Offence, and satisfies only for *that* Share of it which belongs to the *Other*, who is likewise a *distinct* Person, *offended*. To view the Matter in a true Light therefore, you must strike off *One* of the Persons from *any* Share of Right to the *Punishment*, viz. *That* Person whom you suppose to have forgiven, *etc.* Thus though the *same Nature* to which the Offence is *given*, as existing in the Son, is supposed to make Satisfaction to the *same Nature*, as existing in the Father; yet the *Person satisfying*, and the *Person satisfied*, are still kept *distinct*.

What seems to have led you into your Mistake is this; that you suppose, whatever *Distinction* there is in the Divine Nature,

yet it is a *Distinction* which enters not into the *Essence* of that Nature. But this, I doubt, is not sound Divinity; for the *Essence* is *distinct*, or *distinguished*, though not *divided*, by the personal Properties. Each Person is an intelligent acting Substance invested with the *distinctive* Characters of *I, Thou, He*; and with personal Properties and Relations, not distinguishable into more intelligent Agents. *This* Person is distinct Substance, *that* Person distinct Substance, but yet not *Substances*, but one *Substance*: Because *Substance* and *Substance in Union* does not make *Substances*: Otherwise, upon a Supposition that every Being which exists is *extended*, there would be no such Thing as a Being strictly *one* in the whole Universe: Because every Being which is *extended* consists of *Substance* and *Substance*. The Substance of God is in *Heaven*, on the *Earth*, pervades the *Sun, Moon*, etc. because it *acts* in all those Places. Nothing can *act* where it *is not*; neither can there be any *Power* where there is no *Substance*: For that would be a powerful *Nothing*. Now the Divine Substance pervading the *Sun, Moon* and *Earth*, is but *one* Substance; just as the three Persons constitute *one* Divine Nature; and yet the *Substance* which pervades the *Sun* must be *distinct*, though not *divided*, from that which pervades the *Earth*; and that which pervades the *Moon* distinct

THE FIRST LETTER.

distinct from Both; so distinct, that the *One* is not the *Other*; so *distinct* as it may be said, Substance *here*, and Substance *there*.

You see then, that the *Unity* of the Divine Substance does not necessarily exclude *all Distinction*. And, even upon a Supposition of *Non-extension*, if you allow the Deity to *BE where* He acts; the same Method of Reasoning will take Place, and the same Consequence will follow.

To make the Deity *one Person*, the Divine Substance must be supposed to be undistinguished into *more* intelligent Agents than *one*, having the distinctive Characters, *etc.* and that it is thus undistinguished can never be proved: But to make the Deity *one Substance* it is sufficient, that though there be *this* Substance and *that* Substance, yet there is no *Disunion* of *this* from *that*: Because we never call any Thing *Substances*, except where the Parts are *disjointed* or *separable*. Each Person then is Essence or Substance distinguished with appropriate Characters; and *more Persons* are *more Substances*, where the Substance is *divided*, and not otherwise.

Now to apply this: Try the whole Force of your *Metaphysicks*, you will never, by any necessary Connexion of Ideas, make out; that *this* Substance invested with distinct Properties, Relations, *etc.* may not (waving his Right to Punishment) make Satisfaction to *that* Substance however closely united.

If we should suppose *one* pure immaterial created Substance with *two* distinct *Consciousnesses*, which, according to Mr. LOCKE, would make *two Persons*, and whatever else is necessary (if any thing else be necessary) to make two Subsistences; I do not see that it would, in that Case, be any Contradiction for the *One* to make Compensation to the *Other* for an Offence against *Both*.

I am sensible that I have gone beyond my Line, as well as you. But I think I have a very good Apology to make. If I should see a Person, for whom I had as great a Regard as one Man can have for another, wading beyond his Depth, and in imminent Danger of sinking and being lost; I am excuseable if I venture after him with a Design to rescue him and bring him safe to Land; though my Attempt should be attended with some Danger to myself.

After all, I think the Doctrine of the *Satisfaction*, in the main, easy enough; except it be to Those who *desire* to know more than they *can*; or *pretend* to know more than they *do*: viz. as I said before, that the *second* Person in the Trinity as *truly* satisfied the *first* Person (though after a quite *different* Manner) as the Son of a King reigning jointly with his Father, may satisfy his Father for Disloyalty to Both. It is easy enough, I say, if we will rest in Generals. But if we will come to Particulars, if we

C c

must

THE FIRST LETTER.

must enter into the *Minutiae* of it; as, *how* there can be a *triple Distinction* of Substance in the Deity, and yet not *three* Substances, but *one*? And, *how this* distinct personalized Substance made an expiatory Sacrifice to *that* Substance? What Wonder is it, if *here* we are as much lost in endless Mazes, as we are *whenever* the *Divine Essence* is the Subject of our Enquiries? In Matters of so high a Sphere, sufficient to turn the Edge of the acutest Wit, and to baffle the Force of the strongest Understanding, all our *Knowledge* is but acquired Ignorance. We learn to know, that we know little or nothing about the Matter. The

Faciunt nœ intelligendo, ut nihil intelligent;

is never more applicable than here; when we are making Excursions as it were into *Terra Incognita*.

But perhaps we have raised a Dust, and then complain we cannot see. The Question may be wrong stated: Let us try it thus. Vengeance does not belong to God *as the Party offended*; because Punishment does not belong to any *Party* as the *Party offended*. For if it did, then every Person *as offended* would have a Right to punish; and no Person that was *not offended* has any Right to punish. But the Right of avenging is vested in God as the supreme *Law-giver*; and particularly

in the Father, as he is the Fountain-head of the Deity and supreme in Office. The Deity, then is not to be considered, *in* this Case, as the Party *offended*, and at the same Time the Party *appeasing* and *satisfying* itself, in a *strict, literal* Sense : But the *first* Person of the Deity is to be considered as *appointing*, and the *second* Person as *executing*, a *satisfactory* Scheme of making his Hatred of Sin consistent with the Forgiveness of the Sinner ; and consulting the *Summa Rerum*, at the same Time that he shewed his particular Regard to this Speck of the Creation.

We know not how far *our* State might affect the State of *other* rational Beings in other Parts of the Creation, how far it might countenance a Rebellion, and give Intellectual Beings of a higher Rank disadvantageous Notions of their sovereign *Legislator*, if a Set of insignificant Creatures should, after oft-repeated Breaches of his Laws, be admitted to a State of eternal Happiness without any Punishment, *personal* or *vicarious*. A Law without a Sanction is no binding Law ; that is, it is *no* Law at all. Sanctions without One to put them in Execution are *no* Sanctions. If then God has made Laws, has enforced them with Sanctions, he must put those Sanctions in Force ; at least, they must not be such pitiful and slender Fences, that any-one may

overleap them as often as he pleases, and yet escape, upon his Repentance, with Impunity.

We view the Deity then in a wrong Point of Light, when we reflect upon Him as the *Party satisfying himself*. We perhaps should rather regard him as the great *Legislator* of the whole, himself laying and executing a stupendous Plan to secure the Honour of his Laws, and the Authority of his Government: A Plan so extraordinary and amazing, that no Set of *Spiritual* Beings should, upon any Temptation to a Revolt, have any Reason to expect the like Favour; and so sufficient as to leave no Room for Cavil; at least to those enlightened Beings, who see farther than the mere Shell and Surface of it.

If, because we do not see the whole Compages of Divine Providence, but only some Parts of it detached from the rest, we are unable to judge of the *ordinary* Steps of the Divine Conduct, we must be far more incompetent Judges of the extraordinary Measures which he takes. But I need not dwell upon this. You will readily own, that we no more are able to know what God should *do* with Regard to the whole Creation, than we are able to *know* the whole Creation. I shall only observe farther, that some Men have dealt with *Providence*, as others do with the *Scriptures*; who pick out some loose,

loose, disjointed Sentences, which, by *themselves* and *independently* of the rest, look unpromising and unaccountable: but yet are very proper and beautiful when we consider the *whole* Thread, Contexture and *Dependence* of one Thing upon another. But this is foreign to the Question.

I proceed to your next Objection, viz. “that if the Godhead did not suffer, then “Christ is dead in vain.” I have not put down your *Dilemma*; because I have already granted the first Part of it. And as to the second Part of it, I dare not determine, till I have had more Leisure to examine, whether our Saviour’s Sacrifice was *infinitely* meritorious. It is enough at present to say, that it was *so far* meritorious, as to answer the Ends of God’s All-wise Government; and to fulfil the Terms which the Almighty’s manifold Wisdom, unalterable Justice, and essential Holiness required. That our Saviour could not merit *so far*, by an inimitable Original of disinterested Love and unconceivable Goodness, in assuming human Nature; in letting that Nature, thus endeared to him by a most intimate Conjunction, be exposed to Variety of Insults and Outrages; in dignifying that Nature by a strict and vital Union; in advancing it to a sinless Perfection, and then offering it up without Spot or Blemish; That he could not merit *thus far*, I say, it

THE FIRST LETTER.

is incumbent upon you to deduce *à priori* from *intrinsic* Evidence. We imagine, that since God must make a *Distinction*, where there is a *Difference*; since there is a *Difference* between the Angels that sinned not, and Men who all have sinned, and *fallen short of the Glory of God*; We could not have been entitled to the Happiness of the Angels, or made *ισάγγελοι* (equal to the Angels that kept their first Station) unless the Merits of our Saviour had been placed to our Account.

Be that as it will, this is certain; that Repentance in itself, *intrinsically* considered, cannot be so acceptable to God as *unfinning* Obedience; and therefore there *must* be something *extrinsic* to make it so. Here then you see the *Necessity* of a Satisfaction, which in one Place, I think, you question.

But you can no more demonstrate, that the *Fulness of the Godhead, which dwelt in our Saviour bodily* (the Human Nature being assumed into a strict Personality with the Divine) *could* not dignify and exalt his Human Nature, as to sinless Perfection, so to such an uncommon Degree of Merit, as to make it sufficient to atone for Us; this, I say, you can no more demonstrate, than you can demonstrate the utmost *Extent* of the Divine Power, which was vested in *God, manifested in the Flesh*; or shew the *Manner* of the Personal Union.

It

It is allowed by you, and it is very easy to make it out, that no *created* Being can *merit*: Since if such a Being undertook this Province *without Appointment*, it must have been the Height of Presumption, to have imagined that any Thing He could have done, (which must, as you well express it, *have been disproportionate to the Favours received*) could have been an Equivalent for the Sins of a whole World; if such a Being *was appointed*, it would have been made His strict and indispensable Duty. Every Creature shines with borrowed Light, with Merit not his own; that is, with no Merit at all. Creatures have nothing independent of their Creator.

But this was not the Case as to our Saviour. He being not a *mere* Creature could, out of his *own peculiar Fund*, discharge our Debt. He had an *independent* Power over his *Human Nature*. He *had Power to lay it down, and Power to take it up*. You see then the Process. Some *Merit* was required to render our Repentance, what it could not be in itself, *as acceptable to God as unfinning Obedience*.—No mere Creature *could* merit, as having nothing of its own—The *Word made Flesh* might merit—

The Doctrine of the *Satisfaction* and Merits of our Saviour is clogged indeed with *Difficulties*; but it does not imply a *Contradiction*—since it can never be disproved,

but that there is as much Consistence between the *Unity* of the *Substance*, and a *threefold Distinction* of *Persons*; as there is (upon the Supposition of *Extension* of the Godhead) between the *Unity* of *Substance*, and yet a Substance *here*, as in the *Earth*; and a Substance *there*, as in the Sun.—There is therefore as real and substantial a *Distinction* of the *three* Persons in the *Divinity*, as there is of *three* Persons among *Men*, though after a quite different Manner—And therefore *one* Person in the Deity might as truly atone to *another*, though after a quite different Manner, as *one* Man may satisfy *another* for a third—The General Notion then of this Doctrine is easy and plain; but the Particularities and *Minutiae* of it are, perhaps, as perplexing, as those of the *Modus* of the Divine *Omnipresence*, *Eternity*, *Prescience*, *etc.* Just as a blind Man may have a *general* confused Idea of Colour; namely, that it is a Sensation occasioned by some subtle Matter, which, acting on the Eye, communicates it's Motion to the Optick Nerves: And from thence is propagated to the Brain; where it causes different Impressions. And he may *believe* there is such a Sensation upon *Testimony*: But he cannot *frame* any *distinct particular* Idea about it that is not big with Absurdities.

I have

I have over-looked some Things in your second Objection ; and nothing, but a Regard for whatever comes from *you*, could induce me to consider your third, which is as follows : “ That if God the Son offered
 “ to make the Atonement, and the Sacrifice
 “ of himself was a Satisfaction commensurate to the Demerit committed, then it
 “ was not *Mercy* but *Justice* in God to accept
 “ of this *adequate* Satisfaction.” If both your Premises were true (which is not the Case) yet your Inference is wrong. Because God needed not to have accepted any Satisfaction, adequate or inadequate, except upon a *Supposition* of *His own Appointment*. For the *Guilt* being *our's*, he might have insisted, that the *Punishment* should be *our's* too. But how do you reconcile your first Proposition with this Text? *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, etc.* God's *Mercy* (the Riches of his Mercy) was then sufficiently shewn in *appointing* the *Satisfaction* ; His *Wisdom* in *contriving* it, and His *Justice* in *not accepting* Mankind without it. Thus all his Attributes act in Concert.

Your last Objection, runs thus : “ That
 “ if *Eternal Misery* be the appointed
 “ *Punishment* of Faults, committed under
 “ the *Influence* of an imperfect Nature ;
 “ you do not see but *Eternal Happiness* may,
 “ as *justly*, be the appointed *Reward* of a
 “ general

“ *general Tenour* of Compliance with Duty,
 “ in Opposition to the Tendency of an
 “ imperfect Nature biasing to the other
 “ Side.”

Now in Answer to this; not to tire you and myself with the Doctrine of *Merit* and *Demerit*, as, that our best Actions are but what we *ought* to do, and consequently have *no Merit*; but our bad Actions, being what we *ought not* to do, *deserve Vengeance*; that, though we ought to be *punished* for not paying our *Dues*, it does not follow, that we have a *Claim* to a *Reward* for *paying* them; not to mention, that the *Grace of God* has a great Share in *enabling* us to *live well*: To pass all this over, I beg Leave to observe, that you have mistaken the Point. I do not know that the Scripture asserts, or that any one affirms, that *Eternal Punishment* (I lay the Stress upon *Eternal*) is the Punishment merely for our *Faults*, but for our *Impenitency* under them. You will not say, that because *Impenitency* incurs *Eternal Damnation*, therefore our *Repentance*, in all Cases, entitles us to *Eternal Salvation*: Yet this you should make out, in order to prove a *Satisfaction needless*. This would be to assert, that because an obstinate, *unrelenting* Rebel deserves Capital Punishment, therefore his *repenting* Associate, who has deserved all he has from the Bounty of his Prince, (but yet has been seduced through

through Weakness) should, after repeated Breaches of his Allegiance, be advanced to some distinguished Post of Honour. Farther; I know not what you mean by the *general Tenour of Compliance with our Duty*, if you take *all* our *Thoughts* into the Account, and all our *Sins* of Omission.

I believe there are few or none, but who would rather die, than have their *Postscenia Vitæ* (what is done behind the Scenes within their own Breasts,) their vain wicked Thoughts, laid open and exposed to the View of the whole World. I do not know so worthy a Gentleman as yourself, of your Age; so very virtuous as well as ingenious; (I speak without Flattery) and yet, turn your Thoughts inwards, and tell me, whether you are conscious to yourself of such an exalted Worth, as might qualify you to dwell with God, and converse with Angels; though I have some in my Eye, who seem not intirely unqualified to be the worthy Associates of evil Spirits.

I have declined entering into the *Merits* of this Cause, because the Subject of *Repentance* has, I think, been exhausted of late; and I have nothing to say, but what you must have seen set forth in a more forcible, and at the same Time in a more agreeable Manner, than I can pretend to.

Your Preface, with which you usher in your Objections, seems to contain some
latent

latent Poison, though conveyed in an artful and agreeable Vehicle. I beg your Pardon if I mistake you : But by the Conclusion of it one would think, you were going to set aside what you do *clearly* understand, viz. the Arguments from *Miracles, Doctrines, Prophecies*, (the main Contexture and Design of Christianity) on the Account of something which you *cannot fully* understand, viz. the *Doctrine* of the *Satisfaction*. “ It is “ impossible,” you say, “ that Christianity “ should be true, if what relates to this “ Point in the *Scriptures*,” (N. B. these are your Words) “ appears to be absurd.”

To this I answer ; that it is *morally impossible* we should err in judging Christianity to be true, since the *Proofs* are so numerous, strong and decisive ; and lye level to our Apprehensions and Capacities : But we may very probably be mistaken in fancying That to be absurd, which relates to the *Essence* and *Nature* of the Deity ; a Mystery *which even the Angels desire to look into* ; and where there is an *infinite* Disproportion between the Object and the Faculty. If there be any *Criterion* of Truth, if we are not necessarily liable to be deceived in judging of Matters confessedly within the Sphere of our Reason, we may safely conclude, that what has all the distinctive Characters of Truth (all that any ancient Records and Matters of Fact can have) cannot

cannot be a Forgery or an Imposture. But we can never be sure but that, in Matters of so high and elevated a Nature, what *appears* to us to be contradictory to Reason, may *not* be a Contradiction in *itself*, but only the Effect of human Ignorance. One Proof from a Matter of Fact weighs more with me to confirm a mysterious Doctrine, than all the ideal and metaphysical Arguments (though dignified with the pompous Name of Demonstration) do to disprove it: Because I take myself to be a competent Judge of the Truth of *Fact*.

But there are, no Doubt, several intermediate Ideas, and more enlarged Views (necessarily wanting to me) which yet ought to be taken into the Account to reconcile seeming Repugnances, and to make our Reasoning *exact* concerning mysterious Doctrines. This I take to be the Reason why the *Divine Prescience* and our *Free-will* are irreconcilable; I should say, *appear to us* to be irreconcilable; for, no Doubt, they are perfectly consistent in themselves.

I beg your Pardon for trespassing upon your Patience with a long, tedious Letter; where you must expect many Repetitions and great Confusion of Thought. In a Situation where a Person meets with many Interruptions and Avocations, it is impossible he should pursue one continued Chain of
of

THE FIRST LETTER.

of Reasoning. I need not make any Apology for my Style. For, though this Letter, if it were to appear Abroad, ought to have been dressed out to Advantage, yet it may be permitted to wait upon a Friend in an Undress and *Deshabillé* of Thought. If I have said any Thing that may contribute to satisfy you, I shall be glad of it. But if not, I had rather you should call in Question my *Abilities* to serve you, than my hearty and sincere *Inclination* to shew you how much I am, at all Times,

Your entirely-affectionate Friend,

From the School
at Richmond.

JER. SEED.

P O S T S C R I P T.

In the Body of my Letter I have said,
“ that the Right of punishing was vested
“ in God as the sovereign *Lawgiver* of the
“ whole, who could not consistently with
“ the common Good of the whole, for
“ ought we can prove, have remitted the
“ *Punishment* without a *Satisfaction*.” This
you will scarce be able to disprove. “ Why
“ might not then our Saviour *satisfy* to God
“ the Father, considered in *this Capacity* ? ”
You will answer ; that if God was the
supreme *Lawgiver*, and our Saviour God,
then the supreme *Lawgiver* *satisfied* to the
supreme *Lawgiver*. But what if our
Saviour might be *truly* God, (*i. e.* ennobled
with all the *Essential* Perfections of the
Godhead) at the same Time that he divested
himself of the *Capacity* of a *Lawgiver* ; I
mean, during the Time that he was trans-
acting the gracious Scheme of our Redemp-
tion ? For to be the sovereign *Lawgiver* is
no *essential* Perfection of the Deity——If it
were, He could never have been without it.
He must have been *Lawgiver ab æterno* :
That is, he must have been *Lawgiver* when
there were no Beings to give Laws to. It
is plain then, that to be sovereign *Lawgiver*
is no *essential* Perfection of the Deity, but
only a *relative* Property.

This

THE FIRST LETTER.

This seems to overturn your main Argument, *that the Divine Nature satisfied itself*. For if God did not require Satisfaction, *as vested with the Divine Nature, or, as God*, but as the supreme *Lawgiver*; then your Argument, to have been valid, ought to have run thus: That *the supreme Lawgiver satisfied the supreme Lawgiver*: Which I have shewn, was not the Case.

To be *Lawgiver*, then, is no Perfection *essential* to the Nature of the Deity—Consequently our Saviour, still retaining the *essential Properties* of the Godhead, might put off the Character of *Lawgiver*—consequently *needed* no Satisfaction himself—and so might satisfy the Father, in whom *that* Character was lodged. The rest your own Thoughts will supply.

THE SECOND LETTER.

DEAR SIR,

AFTER having attempted to shew, that you had proved no absolute *Impossibility* in the Doctrine of the *Satisfaction*, my Intention was to caution you against mistaking *Difficulties* for *Impossibilities*, and letting your Thoughts fall out into Matters where you could have no Sure-Footing. My Caution was well meant. I was afraid the *Disputer of this World* would get the better of the *Christian*. If my Fears were ill-grounded, pardon my Mistake, and accept of my good Design. Though No-body can have an higher Opinion of your distinguished Abilities and disinterested Love of Truth; yet I considered, that an Affectation of *being wise above what was written* in the deep Things of God, and of pushing our Inquiries beyond our Capacities, had misled the ablest Writers, down from CARTESIUS and MALEBRANCHE, to NEWTON, CLARKE, *etc.* into almost as great Absurdities, as an implicit Acquiescence in the common received Notions of their Country has betrayed the unthinking Vulgar. There is a *speculative*

D d

Fool-

THE SECOND LETTER.

Fool-hardiness, a metaphysical *Quixotism* in Men of very great but enterprizing Geniuses, which prompts them to grapple with Objects, to which every judicious By-stander sees their Strength to be vastly unequal.

Notwithstanding all your Art and *Finesse*, your Proposition, which I excepted to, will not, I doubt, admit of those Softenings, with which you would qualify its Harshness. "I must own it," you say, "to be my firm Persuasion, that it is impossible Christianity should be true, if what relates to *this* Point in the Scripture *appears* to be absurd." Relates to *what* Point, I beseech you, Sir? Why? To a Point to which our Faculties are not suited, *viz. How the Divine Nature could satisfy itself*. Your Sense is confined, by your own Words, to Points too sublime for human Comprehension, and resolves into this Proposition: "In Matters wherein (because they bear no Proportion to our Faculties) we cannot distinctly *perceive* a Doctrine to be absurd, we ought to discard *that* Doctrine, if it have but the *Appearance* of an Absurdity."——By what *appears to be absurd*, must be understood, either what we evidently *perceive* to be a Falshood, or what we only *conceive* to be so. If the former; it is true, that *evident Perception* necessarily extorts our Assent; but this is foreign to your Purpose *here*. Indeed you explain yourself
in

THE SECOND LETTER.

403

in that Sense, but the Subject we are upon must exclude that Meaning. For, since our Ideas of the *intrinsic* Nature of God, the *Unity* and *Distinction* of that Nature, are very obscure, short, and indistinct; since our Knowledge can rise no higher than our Ideas; we never can have any *certain, clear,* and *distinct* Knowledge, where all our Ideas are *obscure* and *indistinct*.

The latter Sense of your Expression, *viz. what appears to be absurd*, you will not contend for: It is plain from numerous Instances, that we may *conceive*, or (if you will give me Leave to use an Expression so highly obnoxious to you) *fancy* a thousand Things to be absurd which are not so. We may form precipitate Judgments (the main Source of Error) without distinct *Perception*. We may go before the Light, instead of following it. If then you have clear and distinct Ideas of the unfathomable Depths of the Divine Nature, which produce distinct Knowledge in you; though they must be your own peculiar Property, yet be so generous as to impart them to a Friend. But if you have not; do not complain that I took Advantage of the Inaccuracy of your Expression; but fairly confess, that your Words either meant nothing at all, or must mean your *conceiving* a Thing to be *absurd* from your very *indistinct* Notices.

THE SECOND LETTER.

That you may not think my *Scheme of Arguing* would overturn all Science at once, and end in universal Scepticism; I grant, that though two Ideas are in the main obscure, yet they may be *so far* distinct, as that we may discern the *one* not to be the *other*; either by immediate Intuition, (as I may know a *Pine-apple* not to be a *Pomegranate*, though I have a very faint Idea of Both) or by the Intervention of one Idea or more which are clear and distinct.

Let us examine these two Propositions, the one *Lactantius's*; the other, in Substance, your's. *The Divine Nature created itself. The Divine Nature, consisting of three Persons, could not satisfy itself.* As to the former, if it be taken in a strict Philosophical Sense, there is a glaring *Contradiction* in it. "The Divine Nature not existing——could not act before it was——could not therefore create itself." Here though the *two* Ideas, the *Divine Nature* and *Creation*, are very obscure and indistinct; yet we perceive a manifest Repugnancy in the Assertion of *Lactantius*, by the Intermediation of a third Proposition, which resolves itself into an Identical one——"Nothing can act before it is——Nothing can have no Properties, otherwise it must be something——*i. e.* Nothing is Nothing." Thus, though our Ideas of the Deity—*Eternity* of the Deity—*Omnipresence, etc.* be very confused,

confused, yet we prove the *Existence* of the Deity, and the *Existence* of these his Attributes by the Help of intermediate Ideas that are distinct, and lye *level* to our Capacities: Nay, we find them necessarily connected with Axioms that cannot be controverted.

Here then all appears in broad Day-light. But if we turn to your Proposition: "No Light, but rather *Darkness* visible." Take it thus: *Three intelligent Agents—Their Nature one and the same—One cannot satisfy the other.* Here, your middle Term, *viz.* the *Divine Nature is one and the same*, which should give Light to the two Extremes, and make them amicably correspond, calls for the friendly Efforts of some metaphysical Heroe, to rescue it from that impenetrable Obscurity in which it is at present involved. And if that Term which should be the *Light* in your Argument, is *Darkness*, how great must that *Darkness* be? You should prove, that the Unity of the Divine Nature must be either *too close* to admit of *distinct* Actions, such as *giving* and *receiving* Satisfaction; or else *too loose* to make *three* Persons *one* God. You should demonstrate; that, either the *Distinction* of the Divine Nature cannot be *wide enough* to answer the *distinct* Offices before mentioned; or that it will not be *strict enough* to make the *three intelligent Agents one Deity*: And then it would follow; that, because the

THE SECOND LETTER.

Divine Nature is *one* and the *same*, *one* intelligent Agent cannot satisfy the *other*. The *Manner* of the *Divine Unity* is as incomprehensible as His *Essence*; and the Ideas we endeavour to frame of it are too lame, inadequate and confused to beget any *certain* and *full* Knowledge; which must always keep pace with our Ideas.

In your second Page, having an inexhaustible Magazine of Thoughts, and Plenty of Ammunition, you are discharging your Artillery into the Air, without levelling directly at me, or defending yourself. Please to remember, that your Sense is ascertained by the Subject you are upon.

To *appear*, and to *be* reasonable, are the same Thing to Us, *where* we evidently *perceive* a Truth. But *where* we only *conceive* a Thing to be true, we may suspend our Judgment.

After having explained your Words in a Sense which they will not bear, you make an Attempt to disprove some inoffensive Expressions at the Close of my Letter. I need not repeat them; your Answer is as follows:

If, say you, a Man of Sense and Impartiality can bring himself to fancy That to be absurd, which in itself is not so, (viz. what relates to the Nature and Essence of the Deity, where there is an infinite Disproportion between the Object and the Faculty)
be

he may as well fancy Truth, where there is none——upon the same infinite Object——

When I first considered this Sentence, I was at a Loss for a considerable Time to know, why you inserted the Words, *a Man of Sense and Impartiality*. I looked upon them as *idle Terms*, which had no Business here; and was going to dismiss them, as impertinent Intruders. But considering, that my Letter was directed to *you*, I find that you had a Mind to bring me under a *Dilemma*; either of giving *you* up as a *Man of Sense and Impartiality*; or, owning that Men of *Sense and Impartiality* may fancy Absurdities and Truth where there are none. What must I do to extricate myself? Give *you* up as a *Man of Sense and Impartiality*? No, by no Means; if my Case were desperate: Because I have repeated, numerous, decisive Proofs of your Sense and Impartiality. No other Resource is then left: I must be so sanguine as to affirm, that Men of impartial Sense may vent several Crudities. For a Proof of which I refer you to MOOR, RAPHSON, DOCTOR CLARKE, *cum multis aliis*; the two former maintaining, that GOD was *Infinite Space*; the last, that HE was the *Substratum, of Infinite Space*, or an *Infinite Vacuum*. Nay, the Doctor conceived (or fancied) that he had *intuitive Certainty* of it. For He says, *it was as plain to him, as that two and two make four.*

THE SECOND LETTER.

But you proceed—*He may fancy the Proofs of Christianity to be strong, numerous and decisive, and a little lower, to lye level to his Capacity, when they in Reality are not so* (I suppose you mean) *to him.* He may *fancy so*, if he pleases: But, if he will attend to the Proofs, he may *do more* than fancy. He may have a *Certainty*, that he must either *disbelieve* every Thing he does not see; or, *believe* Christianity to be true: Christianity having all the Proofs that *any* Matter of Fact has, and several additional distinguishing Proofs which *no other* has.

The Truth of the Case is this: Our Prospect is bounded by a very narrow Horizon; our Faculties are limited within a very confined Sphere of Activity. *Within* That Sphere the Proof of Matters of Fact, if any Thing, lies; and *within* that Sphere Things in the main are easy and obvious. *Beyond* it all, except some few negative, undeterminate Ideas, is an immense Blank to us; and *beyond* it, if any Thing, the *internal Manner* of the Divine Existence, and the *Kind* of the *Unity* and *Distinction* in the tremendous Deity, upon which the Doctrine of the Satisfaction depends, is infinitely removed. Here our Ignorance may *occasion* us to *conceive* (for Ignorance does not *beget* Perception) imaginary Absurdities and appearing Inconsistencies; Either because we have no *direct, proper,*
3 *original*

original Ideas ; Ideas *immediately* derived from the Things themselves, (which single Consideration will be an insuperable Bar to all Pretensions of a *Demonstration against* this Doctrine) or because our Capacities are not able to take in the whole Extent of this Subject.

Demonstration being excluded, you know our Conclusions must be the *Sum total* of our Reasoning. And as a Sum can never be exactly stated, when any Particulars, which should be taken into the Account, are dropt; no more can the Sum total of our Reasoning be just, when any intermediate Ideas are wanting. And what other intermediate Ideas superior Intelligences may have, which have other Inlets of Knowledge, we cannot tell. You tell me, *you think you perceive an Absurdity in it* : So did Doctor CLARKE *think* he had demonstrated, that *Infinite Space* (or *Emptiness*) was a *Property* of the Deity, The *Manner* of the *Divine Subsistence* being placed beyond the Boundaries of *clear and distinct* Perception; and the Doctrine of the *Satisfaction* having an immediate Connexion with it, you cannot *perceive* an Absurdity in the *latter* without *perceiving* the former. If we will not stop, where it becomes us, both you and I may *imagine* we *perceive* Absurdities : And I know no Remedy for it. But,—*is not THIS to plunge us into Scepticism* ? No : Because we see a plain Reason

Reason *à priori*, why Creatures, who can hardly *guess aright* at Things before them, should not irreverently, from the *abstract Nature and Reason of the Thing* (of which they know little or nothing) pass a decisive Judgment upon the *deep Things* of God; humbly content to *see through a Glass darkly*, till the Time comes when they can see *Face to Face*: And judging, that in such Points Human Reason is but human *Conjecture*. But we cannot see a Reason either *à priori*, or *à posteriori*, why we ought not to judge of plain Matter of Fact, and the Proofs of God's Existence.

This is the chief Stand we can make against *Atheism*. The Partitions, you know, between *Deism* and *Atheism* are very thin, and the Transition from the one to the other easy and insensible. A Person, that is an Half-Thinker, may stop at Half-way. But he who will be at any Expence of Thought, must see, that for the very *same* Reasons, for which he *disbelieves* the *Three Persons* in the Godhead, and the *Redemption*; he should, if consistent with himself, *disbelieve* the *One God* and the *Creation*. There is such a mutual Harmony and Correspondence in the Compages of Truth, that, if *one Member suffers*, *all the Members suffer* with it; and, if one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoice with it.

Pray,

Pray, Sir, what do you think of the *Divine Omnipresence*? If the Deity is *unextended*, He cannot be *substantially* present *here, there, every-where*; (except you will say, that He is in *ubi*, but not in *loco*; *every-where*, but in *no Place*) and where there is no *Substance*, there can be no *Virtue*, or *Power of acting*. Well then; is He *extended*? But can you consider a Being of infinite Wisdom, *etc.* under the gross Idea of *Length, Breadth and Height*? At that Rate we might properly say, a Foot, or Yard of the Deity; and if *essential Attributes* are co-extended with an *extended Subject*, a Foot or Yard of Wisdom, *etc.*

If essential Attributes are not co-extended with the Subject, then the whole Divine Wisdom will be in that Substance, which fills Heaven, and yet the whole in that which fills Earth, and so on: The whole in the whole, and whole in every Part. Do not you think you see a Contradiction here? Again, the Notion of *Eternity*, whether you admit the eternal *Succession*, or the eternal *Now*, labours under a Complication of *appearing* (I was going to say, for it is all one with you, *real*) Absurdities. The latter is a Contradiction in Terms; and for the former, see the Eighth Volume of *Spectators*, BENTLEY'S *Boylean Lectures*, and COLLIBER'S *Enquiry*. To clear up my Notions about *apparent* and *real* Contradictions,

dictions, I mentioned, in my former Letter, the seeming Repugnancy between *Prescience* in God and *Free-will* in Man; of which you take no Notice. You like not my Distinction between *real* and *apparent*; and you dare not be so irreverent as to assert, there is a *real* Contradiction between that Power in God and that Faculty in Man; and yet you cannot prove but there is a *seeming* one between them. Does it not *seem* to imply a Contradiction, that God should *infallibly* foreknow *Contingents*; that He should certainly fore-see *uncertain* Events? Be pleased then to put the Doctrine of the *Trinity* and *Satisfaction* (two Doctrines nearly allied) upon the same Foot of Favour with *Omnipresence*, *Eternity*, *Prescience*, *etc.* or, to be of a piece, reject them all alike.

All that I can say is, as before. That though we cannot punctually adjust the Boundaries between Knowledge and Ignorance, and precisely determine where the one ends, and the other begins; yet we see in general, that there is a determinate Province for our Reason to expatiate in: *Within* the Verge of which the Proofs of the *Attributes*, *Revelation* and *Redemption* consist. But when we would enlarge the Scene of our Knowledge *beyond* That, we take a mighty and desperate Leap into the Dark: Where numerous, unsubstantial Phantoms and *Apparitions* of Absurdities (which we think

THE SECOND LETTER.

413

think stand *confest* and *manifest* to our View) disturb our Brain, and unhinge our labouring Faculties.

But enough of this.—I beg Leave to wave the Consideration of your next Topick till I have dispatched what seems to me *more* material. I will not knowingly leave any Part of your Letter that affects *me* unanswered, except the handsome Things you are pleased to intersperse, which are indeed unanswerable by me. Let who will get the better in Point of Argument, you will gain the Conquest (a much nobler Conquest !) in Good-Breeding, Civility, and your endearing Manner of treating me. The weakest Things you say in your Letter are, when (an amiable Weakness !) your Friendship biasses your Judgment in Favour of me.

You say ; that if *the Divine Nature be strictly One, a Satisfaction made by the Divine Nature to the Divine Nature, must be a Satisfaction made by the Deity to Himself.*

You either mean, that where there are *three intelligent Agents* in the same Nature, yet one cannot satisfy the other, because their Nature is *strictly*, without *Distinction, one* ; or I do not understand you. For it is no more proper to say the Divine Nature satisfied the Divine Nature, than it is to say, that the Human Nature in such a *Sufferer*, satisfied the Human Nature of the *Lawgiver*. And I do not know but some acute Persons
may

THE SECOND LETTER.

may think it as much a Contradiction for the same *specific* Nature to satisfy, as it is for the same *numerical* Nature to satisfy, itself. And some, acuter still, may imagine it no Contradiction for the *same* Person to satisfy *himself*, and exemplify what they lay down by the Case of *Zaleucus* King of the *Locrians*; who parted with one of his own Eyes to save one of his Son's. Here, this absolute Monarch, to secure the Honour of his own Laws, and to shew his Detestation of Adultery, as the Party *suffering* gave, and at the same Time as the supreme *Lawgiver* received Satisfaction; and exemplified at once the affectionate Tenderneſs of the *Father*, and the inflexible Justice of the *Legislator* in discouraging Vice.

You say, "*This Person cannot satisfy That, because the Nature or Essence is one and the same.*" I have answered this already in the former Part of my Letter, and I lay some Stress on what I have there laid down: I add here,—That, for ought you can prove, the *Essence* may be *one* and *the same*, because it is *indiscernible* or indivisible—Indiscernibility is no Bar to *Distinction*—What is no Bar to Distinction, can be none to *distinct* Actions—Therefore the Father and the Son may act *distinctly* in respectively *giving* and *receiving* Satisfaction. I own I am so dull of Apprehension, that I cannot discern any Flaw in the Argument, or where
the

the Chain breaks. That Indiscerpibility of Parts, or *indissoluble Union*, may constitute *Unity*, is plain to me; or else, upon the Supposition that every Being is extended, there will be no such Thing as *one* Being in the World——The Divine Substance infinitely expanded—This Part Being, that Part Being, or else it will be nothing, (There being no Medium between Being and not Being :) And yet in the Whole One Being; because the Parts are inseparably united. That *Consciousness* does not constitute *Unity*, shall be proved by and by—

That *Indiscerpibility*, or indissoluble Union of Parts (which either constitutes *Unity*, or we do not know what does) is no Bar to Distinction and distinct Actions, is evident from hence; that *this* Substance or Being, which invigorates and actuates the Earth, acts distinctly from *that* which pervades the fixed Stars: Invigorating the Earth, being a distinct Action from pervading the fixed Stars. But more of this, when I come to answer your Objections against the Catholic Doctrine; after having confuted the novel Scheme which you would build upon the Ruins of it, *viz. that there are three distinct intelligent Substances or Divine Beings*, each *infinite* in all Respects; but *their Substance and Manner of Existence rather similar or uniform, than united*. Before I proceed, give me Leave to ask you, why you would send abroad

an Hypothesis, a forlorn, unfriended Infant, without any Thing to *support* or *maintain* it, either from Scripture, or Reason?

To make some Strictures upon it—

First, It is contrary to Scripture: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord (Jehovah) your God is one Lord*: One *Jehovah*, or necessarily existing Substance; one *אֱלֹהִים* for that, you know, is the Import of the Word *Jehovah*—It is likewise, *Secondly*, contrary to Reason to multiply Beings without Necessity. You have no Ground to suppose *three* infinite Substances; and consequently it is a groundless Supposition. *Thirdly*, Either these *three* infinite Beings are *divided* from one another, or not; If they be *divided*, they cannot *all* be infinite. For where-ever one is separated from the other, there the one must cease to *be*, (which is contrary to the Supposition of Infinity) and the other continue to be expanded. There can be no *Separation* where there is no *Chasm*, and where there is a *Chasm* there can be *no Infinity*.

If they be *undivided*, your Scheme (like a Comet making so near Approaches to the Sun, that at last it is lost and absorpt in it) must coincide with our's; which is, neither to *confound the Persons*, nor to *divide the Substance*. For tell me any Reason, why any *one* of your three infinite Substances should be, strictly speaking, *one*; and I will tell

THE SECOND LETTER.

417

tell you, why all *three*, each inseparable and inseparable, become *one*. The same indiscerptible Continuity, that makes an infinite Variety of Parts (each Part a Being) *one* Being in the whole, will make your supposed *three* Beings to become so too. There is the same Cause, consequently the same Effect. Either *not any* of your three Beings will be *one*, because each consists of *distinct* and *distant* Parts; or, upon the same Grounds, by an intimate Mixture and Indwelling, without any possible Detachment of *this* from *that*, they all *three* will coalesce into *one*. Either *not any* of them will be more than *uniformly* and *similarly one*, or all three will be *united*. You will here retreat to your impregnable Fortrefs *Consciousness*: You will say, that *two distinct Consciousnesses* will make two distinct Beings; that *Egoity*, or *Unity*, or *Indentity* depends upon your *Consciousness*, which makes you (mirabile dictu!) *one Being*, though you are not *one Substance*. The same you say immediately after concerning the Deity. That is, you have invested *Consciousness* with a Power of working Contradictions. For Substance must *be*, or *not be*, it must be a *Being*; or *Nothing*; unless *Consciousness* can make a Thing to *be*, and *not to be* at the same Time. Consequently, *two* distinct Substances, in Defiance of *Self-Consciousness*, and all its wonder-working Magick, must remain *two* distinct
E e Beings.

THE SECOND LETTER.

Beings. You needed not then to have found Fault with me for changing the Terms, where I retained the same Idea: Being and Being in Union (inseparable Union) do not make Beings, or else there will be no such Thing in the World as one Being, of which we have any Notion. Because every Being, of which we have any Notion, is Being and Being in Union: This Part Being, that Part Being, and yet one Being in the whole.

To come more closely to the Point: *You* are *one* Being, it seems, because you have *one Consciousness*; and your three distinct Substances, you will say, are three distinct Beings, because they have three distinct *Consciousnesses*; the *Egoity, Identity, and Unity depending upon Consciousness*. *Consciousness* then, in your Opinion, is the Ground of Unity, but what is the Ground of *Consciousness*? The Tortoise supported the Elephant; but what supported the Tortoise?—

Nothing can be the Ground or *Reason* of any Thing, which, in the Order of our Ideas and of Nature, is *subsequent* to the Thing of which it is supposed the Ground, *etc.* But *Consciousness*, in the Order of our Ideas and of Nature, is *subsequent* to Unity—Consequently, *Consciousness* cannot be the Ground of Unity. The *Major* Proposition is evident: The *Minor* I prove thus: *Consciousness* is that reflex Act by which I know
what

THE SECOND LETTER.

419

what I am, *etc.* If then I must *be* what I am, then *Consciousness* must be *subsequent* to Unity: But I must *be* what I am (*viz.* one or more) *etc.*

The *Being* what I am, is the Foundation of my *knowing* what I am; and not *vice versa*. The Truth of conscious *Knowledge* depends upon the Truth of *Things*, and not the Truth of *Things* upon that of our *Knowledge*. *Consciousness*, being a personal Act, does not *constitute*, but *pre-suppose*, the Personality; from which the Personal Act results. I might further add, that if *YOU* are only *one compound Being*, (you should have said *Person*) because you are *conscious*, then you put off Unity and Personality, like your Cloaths, when you fall asleep; and resume it again, when you awake. In short, Substance is what it is; one or more, whether *conscious* or *unconscious*; and *Consciousness*, which is nothing but *Knowledge*, cannot alter the Nature of *Things*. Your Scheme bears a Resemblance to Doctor CLARKE'S: He made *Necessity*, in the Order of our Ideas, the *Ground* of the Substance, whose *Attribute* it was; and you imagine *Self-Consciousness* to be the *Ground* of *Self-Subsistence*, though the *Self* must be prior to the *Consciousness*.

Having shewn your new Scheme to be unsatisfactory; I proceed in the next Place to remove the Objections against the ortho-

THE SECOND LETTER.

dox Scheme ; which you call (not very consistently with a certain Quality, which is a confessed Part of your Character) *unintelligible Jargon*.

I hope you will not tax me, for the future, with any Injustice for saying, *You were quitting what you did understand for what you did not (fully) understand—*

But what is *unintelligible Jargon*? Is our Notion of *Person* such? It is at least as intelligible as that of *Substance*, which is an undetermined *Something*, an *unknown* Support of certain *Modes*. It is as much above *your* Comprehension to conceive how *one* Person (supposing only one) being infinitely-extended, consisting of an infinite Diversity of Parts, should be yet *one* Substance; as how the *three* Persons should be *one* God. The Trinity is *one Substance*, because *undivided*; not *one Person*, because *distinguished* into more intelligent Agents than one, *etc.* Each of the intelligent Agents is *Being*, because *existing*; but not *Beings*, because they do not exist *separately*. Distinct Personal Properties no more *disunite* (though they *distinguish*) the Substance; than distinct circumscriptive Properties, determining the Parts of Substance to such or such a Part of Space and Distance, *disunite* it, or make it cease to be one.

You charge me with *ringing Changes upon the Distinction of divided Substance and distinct*

distinct Substance. But, are *distinct* and *divided* synonymous Terms? Or, is *Indivisibility* any Obstruction to *Distinction*?

Consider once more, That inexhaustible *Power* which wields so many massy Bodies as the Planets *in* our solar System (and *beyond* it, if the fixed Stars are each of them attended with their respective Retinue of revolving Orbs) and that unfathomable *Wisdom*, which adjusts such Variety of Movements without any Confusion. Now where there is infinite *Power* and *Wisdom*, there must be a wise and powerful *Substance*. That Substance which regulates the Revolution of the Planets in the *fixed Stars*, must be *distinct*, in *Place*, *Situation* and *Action*, from the particular Substance, which bids our Planets *here* go their incessant Round: And yet it is not *divided*; because there is one uninterrupted Chain of Being without any Chasm, Gap, or Discontinuity. Just as we call an Argument *one*, where each Link of the Chain adheres necessarily to the other by an unbroken Connexion of the Parts.

When therefore you say, that *Substance united to Substance consists of different Substances*, you run counter to your own Scheme (where each of your three distinct *Beings* will, according to this Way of arguing, be *Substances* infinite in Number) and to the common Sense of Mankind; which never

gives the Name of *Substances*, but where the Parts are disbanded, or capable of disbanding and taking different Routs. *Matter* indeed is not Substance, but an Heap of Substances; because it consists of un-united, independent Parts. But when the Parts are so inviolably *wedded*, that there is no *divorcing* this from that; such a Being we call truly One: The Parts being *essentially united*. View then each Link of the Chain together.—The three Persons are Substance and Substance essentially united, having each of them the distinctive Characters of *I, Thou, He*, not distinguished into more intelligent Agents — Substance in Union with Substance doth not make Substances, therefore not *three* Gods — Doth not prevent *distinct* Action — Therefore the Father and the Son might act *distinctly*; the one in *admitting*, the other in *giving* an Atonement —

If you answer, that the Hypothesis of the *Divine Extension* may be ill-grounded; I will grant it: But it does not affect what I contend for: That Substance and Substance in Union do not make Substances, which destroys your Scheme. For, since the *Essence* must be where the Essential *Attributes* are; since the Essential *Attributes, Wisdom, Power, etc.* display themselves every-where; the whole *Essence*, upon the Scheme of Non-Extension, must act *here*; the whole *Essence* must act *there*; and the whole

whole Effence *every-where* ; whole in the whole, and whole in every Part : Which amounts to the same Thing in the last Resort. As long as the Proposition before-mentioned stands its Ground (which will be as long as there is any sound, unbiaſſed Senſe to diſcern that what is *neceſſarily united* muſt be *One*) the main Objections, which bear the hardeſt upon the Doctrin of the *Trinity* and *Satisfaction* from *Arianism* and *Tritheism*, will fall impotently to the Ground.

It even *compels* You to come (*nolens volens*) into the ſame Scheme, and *preſſes* You into the ſame Service. For, what You call three diſtinct, infinite Beings, muſt be Subſtance united to Subſtance by an unalienable Attachment, and conſequently make not three diſtinct Subſtances, nor therefore three diſtinct Beings.

If you will be content to reſt in *Generals*, without inquiring into the *minute* Circumſtances, or embracing any *particular* Explication of the *Ubiquity* ; this is what I adviſe you to concerning the *Trinity*. And indeed in theſe high Points we are like People upon *marſhy* Ground. We may ſkim *lightly* over the Surface. But if we *fix* our Foot ; if we *dwell* too long upon any particular Spot ; we ſink irretrievably, and the more we ſtruggle to get free, the more we are gravelled.

THE SECOND LETTER.

What you object, in Answer to my *Postscript*, is so very ingenious and diverting, that I can scarce find in my Heart to examine it. I had said, that to be sovereign *Lawgiver*, was no *Essential* Perfection of the Deity: If it were, he must have been *Lawgiver ab æterno*, when there were no Beings to give Laws to. Upon which you comment thus: *Take a Specimen of your Reasoning*, say you, *Goodness is no Essential Perfection of the Deity; for then must He have been good ab æterno; good before there were any created Beings to be good to.* The same may be said of *God's Justice*.—Do you call this a Specimen of my Reasoning? Sure you do not think me so senseless. The Attributes of God are to be considered either *ad intra*, or *ad extra*; either as *inherent in God*, or, as *manifested by Him*: God then was *internally Good, Wise, etc. ab æterno*, before he *exerted* those Attributes: But to be an *internal Lawgiver* is a Contradiction in Terms. God is *Good* by an absolute Necessity of Nature. But then the *Exertion of his own infinite and unerring Perfection* in the Capacity of a *Lawgiver* is perfectly free. He might have created no Beings, or none that there would have been any Occasion to give Laws to; or he may annihilate them. His Goodness and Wisdom are *Essential* to Him: But his *Manifestation* of that Goodness or Wisdom, in
this

this or that *particular Manner* of Acting, is *voluntary*. If you will say, that it is necessary to us that he should be *Lawgiver*, *stante rerum Hypothesi*: I answer, this is only a *conditional* Necessity; and farther; that, upon a Supposition of three Persons in the Deity, it is no more necessary that the *Son* should be *supreme Lawgiver*, than that the *Father* should be *Judge* at the last Day. Though the *same* Attributes are vested in Both, yet Both need not display them in *this* or *that* particular Scheme of Action. Till then more forcible Objections are brought, I must still conclude; that what I have advanced in my *Postscript* is a good Solution of your main Difficulty.

Upon comparing the scattered Passages in my Letter, which you bring together concerning the Merits of our Saviour, I find a plain Contradiction. I need not point it out to you; who had, I am sure, Sagacity enough to perceive it, and Candour enough to pass it by.

If the Divinity irresistibly over-ruled the Humanity, and made it *intirely passive*, then it did not exalt and perfect, but destroy the human Nature, it made it a mere Machine; but if it did not irresistibly controul it, then our Saviour's human Nature is as much intitled to the Glory of sinless Perfection, as Angels and Archangels.

The

THE SECOND LETTER.

The human Nature of CHRIST, by it's Obedience to the Will of GOD, did no more than what, as a Creature, was it's Duty to do : Consequently, by your own Way of arguing, it could not merit. The Merit then of his Sufferings, if they could have any Merit, must arise from the Sufferings of a Divine Person.

Answer. Though the Sufferings were the Sufferings of a Man ; yet the Oblation was the Oblation of a God. *We are redeemed, not with any corruptible Thing, but with the precious Blood of Christ, who, by his eternal Spirit, or Deity, offered himself without Spot to God.*

And this Act of the Deity, thus offering up his human Nature, is, I think, sufficient, all Circumstances being taken into the Account, to constitute Merit. Because, as I observed in my former, all Creatures shine with borrowed Light, with Merit not their own : That is, with no Merit at all. They have nothing independent of their Creator. But our Saviour, who was God as well as Man, could, out of his own peculiar Fund, discharge our Debt. He, as God, had an independent Power over his human Nature. And to offer up what was his own INDEPENDENTLY, what was endeared to him by a personal Union, by a free and voluntary Act, may be, I hope, allowed to be meritorious ; or else I have no Notion of Merit.

THE SECOND LETTER.

427

Merit. Either then you are to prove, that no supernatural Means were necessary for our Atonement—or, that God would not, or could not, find out any such Means—or, that he could have contrived a better Expedient. For the first, see LAW, and my former Letter. The second is too derogatory to God's Power and Goodness for you to assert. The last seems impossible. Because, single out what Angel or Archangel you please for your Purpose, this expiatory Sacrifice will have all the Excellency (*viz.* a perfect Model of Virtue, without any Alloy of Vice) that any other can have; and will besides be ennobled with distinguishing Excellencies of it's own. For the personal Union will cast a more distinguished Glory on whatever is so nearly and inseparably allied to the Deity, than any Creature besides can have. To confirm which we may observe, that the Son of Man is placed *above* the Angels, where they are said to be *ignorant of the Day of Judgment*. And whatever was deficient in this Sacrifice, if there was any Deficiency, was, or might be, made up by the *infinite Merits* of the Offerer *super-added* to it, and placed to *our* Account. Thus, *God was in the World reconciling the World to himself. He became the Author of eternal Salvation, etc.*

THE SECOND LETTER.

What those Merits *particularly* were, we need not inquire. A Man may know he *is ransomed* by another from Captivity, without knowing the particular *Kind, Manner* and *Value* of the Ransom. It is enough we know, that a *Divine* Person interested himself in this Affair. We must distinguish between the *Equivallency* of the Atonement and the *Merit* of it. The *Equivallency* consisted in this, that as one intelligent Being is more valuable than the whole Mass of insensate Matter; so one faultless Pattern of Perfection is of more Worth than a whole World of sinful Creatures. The *Merit* of it, as far as our general confused Notions reach, consisted in this, not *exclusively* of any *other* Means of meriting unknown to us; that the Oblation was the free, unconstrained Act of One, more worthy than any Creature, offering up what was his own, and transacting the Scheme of Man's Salvation.

To enliven this dry Subject with an occasional Reflection. I wonder why those Writers, who fancy the Scale of Beings to rise gradually from Matter, in a regular Gradation, by an easy Transition from one Species to another, till they make near Approaches to Infinity, do not suppose our Saviour, partaking of both Natures, to be the *intermediate* Link between an uncreated Being and Creatures; as they
 imagine

imagine Man to be the *Nexus utriusque mundi*, and to fill up the Gap between the *intellectual* and the *animal* Creation. This, you will say, is a wild Thought. But we fanciful Writers, when once we fly out, *pennis non homini datis*, into that mighty Void, where Knowledge fails, will people the Vacancy with Ideal Phantoms and Creatures of our own Brain.

But this puts me in Mind of the Conclusion of your Letter. I am no more for *digesting manifest Absurdities* than you are. But I see no Absurdity here, except this be one; that Creatures of Yesterday should pretend to go to the *Bottom* of an *infinite* Subject with a very *scanty* Line. The most substantial Proof we can give of our *Knowledge* and *Judgment* is, to have a deep Sense, and to make an humble Acknowledgment, of our *Ignorance* and *Incapacity* to judge about these Things. An *Atheist* or *Manichæan* would argue thus: Such a Thing appears to me *manifestly* evil—therefore, Creation not the Work of a good God—therefore, no over-ruling Providence at the Helm. Just so you argue; Such a Doctrine appears to me manifestly absurd—therefore Scripture not the Word of God. Whereas Both begin at the *wrong* End. Superior and uncontrouled Miracles, such as *raising the Dead, creating Bread, etc.* do as much prove the Scripture to be the Word

THE SECOND LETTER.

Word of God, as the common *stated* Course of Things prove an over-ruling Providence. That being once granted; you are no more at Liberty to reject a *Doctrine*, because it may *appear* to you absurd, than a *Manichean* or *Atheist* is to reject a good Providence, because such a *Phænomenon* may *appear* to him evil. And Both should consider, whether it be not more easy to conceive that this *Phænomenon*, or that *Doctrine*, may *possibly* admit of a *rational* Solution; than that which is attested by *such* Miracles should be false; or that there should be no Providence. It is *You* then that are going to take away the *Criterion* of Certainty, by supposing, that what is stamped with the Seal of God is *manifestly absurd*. What you say above, that God *may permit very strong and forcible Proofs from Miracles without being said to tempt us*, does not come up to the Point. For our Process is this—Nothing can *unsettle* the Course of Nature in such a Train of superior Miracles, as *raising the Dead, etc.* but He who *settled* the Course of it, *viz.* God: God will not *lend* his Power, or *act* himself (which is widely different from *permitting* a Thing to be done) to authorize a Falshood—Consequently, there is no Falshood: Unless a Thing may be at once *true* as attested by God, and *false* as contradictory to Reason,

You

You may say, that we have only a *moral* Certainty that the Miracles were wrought; but an *absolute* Certainty that the Doctrine is false—A *Manichæan* would undoubtedly reason in the same Manner upon his Principles; but neither of you can prove your several Conclusions. I answer farther; that though the *Kinds* of Evidence, *viz.* *absolute* Certainty, *moral* Certainty, *Probability*, are very *distinct*, when we consider the *lowest* Degree of the one (as, for Instance, of Probability or a *Likeness* to be true) and the *highest* Degree of another (as *moral* Certainty); yet where they make *near* Approaches, they are undistinguishable. Just as in the Rainbow, one Colour falls away so gradually, and another rises so insensibly, that we see the Variety without being able to distinguish exactly where the one begins, and the other ends:

Usque adeò quod tangit, idem est; tamen ultima distant.

Thus *absolute* and *moral* Certainty are, in some Cases, parted as it were by an invisible Line. And though *Proofs* of Matter of Fact fall under the Head of *moral* Certainty; yet we may be as *absolutely* sure that King *Charles* the First lost his Head, and that *Julius Cæsar* was stabbed in the Senate-House,

THE SECOND LETTER.

House, as we can of some *Mathematical* Demonstrations.

I need not apply this to Christianity. I do not put the Issue of my Cause *solely* upon Proofs from Matter of Fact: Several others are to be taken into the Account, particularly the *intrinsic* Excellency of the Scriptures. For I cannot conceive how a Set of *obscure* Men could more fully unfold, and more strongly enforce, every Branch of Religion without the Assistance of God, than all the *Lawgivers* and *Philosophers* from the Beginning of the World to that Time: carrying it to such an Height, that whatever attempts to go *beyond* it, is visionary and *Romantick*; and whatever falls *short* of it is jejune and defective.

If I have dropt any Expression that bears hard upon you, or seems to shew the least Disregard for you, I will retract it, and beg your Pardon; sincerely desiring the Continuance of that Friendship, which I take to be an Happiness, as well as an Honour, to me. If there be any Thing that you may think a mere Compliment; it is, I assure you, not half so much as what I have said of you in your Absence. Here I could expatiate.—But when the Heart is *full* of Esteem, affectionate Sentiments, and undissembled Love, there is no confining the Pen within certain Bounds. I therefore forbear.—Only do me the Justice to believe,

THE SECOND LETTER.

433

believe, that I never wrote any Thing with more Sincerity than what follows : That you may live long and happily, that you may defend the most valuable Thing in the World, Christianity (and I believe you will) with your Pen, and adorn it with your Life, is the affectionate Wish of,

Worthy SIR,

Your's sincerely,

Richmond, June 10th,
1731.

JER. SEED.

THE THIRD LETTER.

WORTHY SIR,

WERE I to copy after the Model of your last Letter, the Contest between us would consist of these three Things: *First*, Who could say the *handsomest* Things of one another: *Secondly*, Who could say the *bitterest* Things against one another; and, *Lastly*, Who could produce the strongest Arguments to support his own Notions.

I must chiefly keep to the *last* of these: Declining the *first*, because it is too *copious*; and the *second*, because too *barren*. I might indeed be very severe, but then it would be upon myself. The Arrow might be drawn to the Head, and levelled with a dexterous Aim; but could not reach a Merit which towers to so uncommon an Height as your's. It is with some Reluctance I tell you, that it was unmanly and ungenerous to point your Hostilities against me, when you knew it was not in my Power to make Reprizals upon you. Do but become like me, *positive* and *confident*; combating your own Shadow, beating the Air; in short, labouring under a deplorable Want of com-
mon

THE THIRD LETTER.

433

mon Sense : Give me but one Inch of Ground to set my Foot upon, and you will find that I can shake even the Weight of your Character. But while I consider *You* as a Gentleman of uncommon Sense and Merit,

“ With Wit well-natur’d, and with Books
“ well bred ; ”

I cannot satyrize what is no Subject of Satyr. For *You* then to provoke me to enter the Lists with you, by pointing your Raillery against me for Pages together, was (I will repeat the Charge) as cowardly, as if a Man, who was invulnerable from Head to Foot, should challenge a weak, defenceless Creature to single Combat——But enough of This.

In the following Letter you will find some Things passed lightly by, either because I thought they had not much Weight, or because I thought them answered already. I would willingly lay down *this* as a Rule to go by (though it is ten to one but that I myself deviate from it) *viz.* to take Notice of nothing *but* what is really a Difficulty ; and to omit nothing that is really so ; to keep close to the Merits of the Cause, and to pare off Luxuriancies.

With this View I will not defend my Instance about a *Pine-Apple*, and a *Pome-*
F f 2 *granate* ;

THE THIRD LETTER.

granate; not because I think it *indefensible*, but because I think it *impertinent*, or unnecessary to determine the Point in Debate——

I find, a little lower, you will *disagree* with me, where we do not really *differ*. The *middle Term*, you say, *is not the Divine Nature*; but, *the Unity of the Divine Nature*. Very well: And do not I say the very same? I having said, that “the *Manner* “of the Divine Unity was *incomprehensible*;” you thence would conclude, that it is *unintelligible*; as if *Incomprehensible* and *Unintelligible* must have the same Signification. Notwithstanding you, both here and elsewhere, confound them; it would be an Affront to your Understanding to point out the Distinction between them. My Account of *Unity* is, it seems, to you very *loose and indeterminate*; and you cannot *discover how a wide Unitarian differs from a Tritheist*. If you consult Bishop BULL’s *Catholick Doctrine of the Trinity*, you will find, that the Imputation of *Tritheism* is never to be fastened but on those who *divide the Substance*. Suppose then a Person, who was invested with a Power of *working* superior Miracles, should tell me; that in the Divine Substance there was a *triple* Distinction: *Greater* than that of three mere *Modes* and *Relations*; and yet *less* than that of three distinct *Men* or *Angels*. My

Ideas here are merely *negative*——“ A Distinction in the Divine Nature—not that of three *Modes*,——not that of three distinct *Substances*: ” Yet I may give a rational Assent to this Doctrine ; because I cannot prove it to be *impossible*. Not *distinctly* perceiving the *Divine Nature*, I cannot *distinctly* perceive a Contradiction in the Nature of the Thing ; and nothing, but a Contradiction and Impossibility, can be a Bar to the Belief of a Doctrine attested by Miracles. But should the same Person assert, that Divine Substance was *one*, yet *severed* by a μέγα χάσμα (a great Gulph or Discontinuity ;) this Proposition I could not admit ; because I clearly perceive, that what is *disunited* cannot be *one*. The short of the Matter is this. Whatever is *one*, must be *indivisum in se*. But *Tritheism* supposes the *Division* or *Divisibility* of the *Substance*.

Thus my Notion of the Divine *Unity*, however lame and inadequate, is too *strict* to admit of the Name of *Tritheism*, and yet *wide* enough to take in three *undivided intelligent Agents* into the same Divine Essence. And whoever pretends, from the negative Ideas of *Indivisibility*, and *Simplicity* (or, a Negation of heterogeneous Mixtures) to prove, that no Kind of *Union* whatever is sufficient to make *more Persons one Being* ; will soon find, that He is to work up a

THE THIRD LETTER.

Demonstration, where he has not sufficient *Data* to build upon.

This would be,

“ *Parva per Tyrrhenum Æquor —*
“ *Vela dare.*”

where our Reason will be soon overfet, or carried with every *Wind of Doctrine*.

For my Part, I still own, I want your discerning Faculty to find out the necessary Connexion between *indivisible* and *undistinguishable*. *Distinction* and *Divisjon* seem, to my dull Apprehension, two *different* Ideas. You will ask me, no Doubt, what *Distinction* That is, which is neither a Distinction of three *Modes*, nor yet a Distinction of three *Substances*. To which I answer, that Substance and Substance united is *more* than three *Modes*, and yet not three *Substances* : Because whatever is *essentially* united, is *one Substance*. You ask, “ Is the Substance of the *second* Person the same *numerical* Substance with that of the *first* ? etc.”

I wish your enterprizing Genius would oblige me with fixing some certain *Principle* of *Individuation*, that I might know what makes one *numerical* Substance, according to your Philosophy.

Let me prevail upon you, to add this Favour to your former. In your *second* Letter

Letter you were pleased to honour me with / a new *Tritheistical* Hypothesis, which was highly diverting; though, I must confess, not very edifying. In your last, as there is no End of your Favours, You advance (solely with a View to my Entertainment) a new Scheme, viz. the *limited Extension* of the Divine Substance, making the Deity to be no more than *commensurate to his Works*; that is (for it is the only Sense the Word *commensurate* bears) no more than *co-extended* with them as far as they reach. Proceed, Great Sir, to crown your repeated Kindnesses with this last Master-piece of an adventurous Fancy: Namely, an *Attempt to fix the Principle of Individuation*. 'Till you have done that, give me Leave to use the Word NUMERICAL with due Latitude; and to think, that it may admit of a *larger* or a *stricter* Sense.

For Instance; according to your new Scheme of the *limited Extension* of the Deity, (I know you will be pleased that I take so much Notice of a *Stranger-Hypothesis*, which is endeared to me by no Circumstance but it's Relation to *You*;) I would ask, whether this Substance, which is commensurate to the Earth, be *numerical*, or no? In the *strictest* Sense of the Word it must, except there can be a *Medium* between—Being and No-Being: It must be *one numerical Part*, and that is *one Being*. And yet, except

THE THIRD LETTER.

you will admit as many *Substances* as there are *Parts* in your *finitely extended Deity*, it must be in a *larger* Sense one *numerical* Substance with That which is commensurate to the Sun, to the fixed Stars, *etc.*

But, whether you will reject, or no, your *new* Hypothesis, I will leave you to disprove, that *This* Substance can act *distinctly* from *That* when it is *indivisibly* united to it; and consequently (in my Sense of the Word *Numerical*) one Substance with it.

I am sensible you would be uneasy, if I should dismiss your Hypothesis thus, without being more *particular* in my Regard to it. That you may not therefore complain of my *Coldness* and *Indifference* to any Thing of your's, I shall spend a little more of my Time upon it, and pay my Compliments in an ampler Manner.

If the Deity be *only commensurate* to his Works; then, He either *can* act beyond the Confines of this World, or He *cannot*. If he can; then His Existence, according to you, reaches beyond it's Verge. For nothing can act *where* it is not; any more than it can act *when* it is not. If He *cannot* act beyond this determinate Sphere, then there must be something to obstruct Him. For a mere *Nothing* cannot be a Bar to his Action. And the extra-mundane Void is a mere *Nothing*. I know that the *Translator*
of

of Archbishop KING quotes EPISCOPIUS to prove it an Absurdity, that the Deity should be in an extra-mundane Void. "Because to be *in* a Place, supposes the Deity to take a *Denomination* or real *Habitude* from the Place in which he is. But he cannot derive a real *Habitude* from *Nothing*." But notwithstanding this, I would ask ;——Was the Deity in the Void, where the World *now* is, *before* He produced it? If He was, then He may exist in the extra-mundane Negation of Matter beyond the Scene of his Operations, as well as He did in this Void, before the mundane System was in Being. If he was not, then how could He exert his Power, where his Substance was not? This would be *to hang Power* in a *literal* Sense, as *Job* does the *Earth* in a *figurative*, *upon Nothing*. It would be to build Castles in the Air, without any Foundation.

You are apt, it seems, to subscribe in the Negative to the Immensity or Infinity of the Deity—But can you really set Bounds to that Being *whom the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain?* Can you say to him, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther;* and here *shall thy Existence be stayed?* This is all we mean by *Infinite*, viz. A Negation of Bounds. If the Deity be not *Infinite* or *immense*, then He must either be bounded by *Himself*, or by *some Other*—or by *some Impossibility*

Impossibility in the Nature of the Thing. Not by Himself—For he necessarily is, what He is. He cannot therefore admit of any Diminution or Increase even from Himself—much less can He admit of these from any Other, both for the same Reason, and because whatever *limits*, must be *superior* to what is *limited*—Not, by any Impossibility in the Nature of the Thing; for it is no more impossible for the Deity to be infinite in his *Existence* than in his *Duration*. He who is infinite in *one* Perfection, may be infinite in *all*. There can be no *Limitation*, where there is no *Limiter*. For *Limitation* being an *Effect*, must suppose a *Cause*. But *Extension*, you say, *infers Parts*; and *Parts*, *Number*; and *Number*, *Limitation*. I am not obliged to defend *Extension* any more than you; and consequently am not solicitous whether this be a just Answer: That, by *Number* you either mean *actual Number*, or the *Power of Numbering*. It is true, that *actual Number* can never be infinite, because what we actually number cannot be numberless: But still our *Power of Numbering* can have no Bounds, which is too plain to dwell upon. As far as we do *actually* number, it cannot be infinite. But still we must conceive an infinite Surplus behind.

Though you triumph over me in an unmerciful Manner, I no more grant *infinite Extension* than you do. And yet you suppose

suppose it, as well as I do, in your former Letter. I can shew you the Passage:

“ I would not willingly suppose the Deity

“ to be measurable by Yards, Ells, and

“ Poles; but then I cannot help conceiv-

“ ing something Analogous to Extension.

“ For universal Action supposes the uni-

“ versal substantial Presence of the Deity,

“ and universal substantial Presence infers

“ something analogous to Extension.

“ WHERE and PLACE are Terms relative

“ to the spacious extended Existence.” Be it

so; then I doubt the Deity will be extended.

For can we *live, and move, and have our*

Being in God, and yet that very Being in

whom we live, etc. not be present, *where*

we live, and move, and have our Being?

From those manifest Traces of the Divine

Wisdom, which appear through the whole

Oeconomy of Nature, we infer that there is

every-where a wise Cause subsisting. The

whole World is, in this Respect, as it were

one great Temple; where, as in the *Jewish*,

the *Shechinah*, or Divine Presence, shines

concent in a visible Glory. Give me Leave

to cite, for this Purpose, an admirable

Passage, in CICERO, *pro Milone*, which I

do not remember to have seen quoted:

“ Est, est profectò illa Vis (*cælestis*) neque

“ in his Corporibus, atque in hac Imbecilli-

“ tate *inest* quiddam quod vigeat ac sentiat;

“ & *non inest* in hoc tanto Naturæ, tam

“ præclaro

THE THIRD LETTER.

“ præclaro Motu : Ni fortè idcirco esse non
 “ putant, quia non apparet, nec cernitur :
 “ Proinde quasi nostram ipsam mentem,
 “ quâ sapimus, quâ providemus, quâ hæc
 “ ipsa agimus ac dicimus, videre, aut plane
 “ qualis, aut ubi sit sentire possimus.” You
 might as well fancy, that the Soul can perceive
 the Images of Things, and actuate the Body,
 without being *present* in the Brain ; as that
 the Deity can invigorate all Nature without
 being *present* every-where. The only
 Question at present is ; not whether the
 Deity be every-where, or in every Place ;
 but, whether *extended* or *non-extended* ?

If the Deity be *unextended*, this Substance
 which acts in this Point of Space, must be
 either *all* the Divine Substance, or *not all*.
 There can be no more a Medium (upon a
 Supposition of the Deity's acting in this
 Place) between either the *whole* Substance
 being here, or *not the whole* ; than there
 can between *Being* or *not Being* ; between
material or *not material*. And you might
 as well affirm, that the Deity is neither
extended nor *unextended* ; as affirm, that he
 is neither *totus in toto*, nor yet Part *here*,
 and Part *there*. If you say, it is the *whole*
 Substance that acts *here*, then the Divine
 Substance is *exhausted here*, and there can
 be no Remainder left to *fill the Heaven, etc.*
 For there cannot be *more* than *All*. The
Fulness of the Deity, this Scheme supposes,

is engrossed by this Part ; And yet it is not engrossed either. For it subsists *whole* in another Part ; and so on *in infinitum*. If you say, it is not the *whole*, then you admit of *Parts*, and consequently of the *Extension* of the Deity : And indeed I would embrace this Scheme readily, if the Difficulty of *totus in toto* did not haunt it too. For upon the Hypothesis of Extension, either the essential Attributes are co-extended with the Essence, or they are not. If they *are* co-extended, then there will be Ells, and Yards, and Miles of the divine Consciousness. But if they *are not*, then, as the Essence cannot be without the Essential Attributes, they must be either Part here and Part there, which would be to make as many distinct Consciousnesses as there are Parts ; or they must be *tota in toto*.

I know not how to get over these Difficulties without having Recourse to the Scheme of Analogy, which the *Cambridge-Wits*, for whom I have a very great Regard, generally declare against. The Deity must be a Being whom no Place can exclude, and none include or circumscribe. And if we may argue from our imperfect Ideas ; Either his immaterial Substance must be all and intire with every Part of the corporeal Substance it has an immediate Communication with——or it must be united to it Part by Part ; so that they shall be co-extended.

If

THE THIRD LETTER.

If then you can believe the Deity to be *Omnipresent*, though you cannot conceive the *Manner* of his *Omnipresence*, why cannot you believe the Trinity in *Unity*, though you cannot conceive how *three*, in one Respect, should be *one* in another? You believe the Former, because you can prove the Reality of the Thing from *Reason*; why do you not then assent to the Latter, because you can prove it from *Scripture*? The Scripture was no more written to *explain* the *Doctrine* of the Trinity, than Reason was given you to *explain* the *Modus* of the Divine *Ubiquity*. But you have a singular Fancy, "That the Scripture asserts three distinct Divine Beings." If you can make out, that it asserts three *separate* or *separable* Beings, the Proof will be as valuable a Curiosity as your Principle of *Individuation*, for which I am to be indebted to you. If you cannot; whatever falls short of this, will be, give me Leave to say, impertinent.

The next Article is that of *Eternity*; which you define by an *unalterable Permanency*, and an *infinite Ability to exist*—two different Ideas. For infinite Ability to exist is no more infinite Permanency or Duration; than your Ability to answer this Letter is an actual Answer to it. You deny both the *eternal Succession* and *eternal Now*: That is, according to your Scheme, the Deity neither exists *all at once*; nor yet *not all at once*, or successively;

ſucceſſively; and if you can believe this, *great is your Faith*. For my Part, I find it impoſſible to doubt, that the Deity has not exiſted longer To-day, than he had done Yeſterday: And conſequently that he exiſts **SUCCESSIVELY**: And what neceſſarily extorts my Aſſent, I muſt believe to be true. I argue farther, that a *Succession of Operation* neceſſarily ſuppoſes a *Succession of Duration*. He who *acts* not all at once, exiſts not all at once. But the Deity acts not all at once. He, who created the World in ſix Days, redeemed Mankind ſome Thouſand Years after; who will deſtroy it in Time to come, and then judge it; He, I ſay, operates ſucceſſively: And what *operates* ſucceſſively, *endures* ſucceſſively. If *paſt*, *preſent*, and *future* may be applied to the *Operations* of the Deity, then they muſt be applied to the *Deity operating*.

This is little leſs than a Demonſtration of the *ſucceſſive* Exiſtence: And yet I will not deny that it is clogged with inextricable Difficulties; far greater than any the Trinity is embarrasſed with. If I had a mind to particularize them, I could pour upon you an Inundation of Metaphyſics. But I chuſe rather to refer you to the Writers mentioned in my laſt.

The next Article that falls under your Conſideration is the Divine *Preſcience*.

To convince you of the Danger of wading beyond your Depth ; and that there may be an *apparent* Contradiction, where there is not a *real* one, I asked you, “ Does it not “ seem to imply a Contradiction, that God “ should infallibly foreknow Contingencies ? “ That he should certainly foresee uncertain “ Events ? ” To this you reply, that *Events may be certain, but not necessary*. But can that be certain, which may be, or may not be, which I suppose is the Meaning of *not necessary* ? And is not what depends upon the Will of a free Agent, what may, or may not be ? Whatever *certain* and *necessary* may be in other Cases ; yet they seem here, which is all I contend for, to be equivalent Terms. Either the Deity’s Fore-knowledge is absolutely certain and infallible, or it is not. If it is not, the Deity’s Knowledge would be imperfect ; and all Imperfection is to be removed from the Deity.

If it be said, that it is absolute, how can there be an absolutely certain and determinate Knowledge of what is undetermined—what is floating in Suspence,—what I have in my Power to act, or not to act ? As to what you say below, I answer, that God does not *necessitate* Actions by his infallibly foreseeing them ; but he could not, if we may argue from our imperfect Views, infallibly foresee them, if they were not necessary, or contingent. His Infallibility
is

THE THIRD LETTER.

449

is not the *Cause*, but it is the *Result*, of the Certainty of the Object. As to your Argument (which is very ingeniously expressed, as every Thing of yours is) drawn from the Deity's intimate Knowledge of the Workings of human Nature; it's Passions and Reasonings: I answer, either these necessarily determine the Soul, or not. If they do not, then such must the Knowledge necessarily be as the Action (the Object of that Knowledge) is; fixed and determined, if *that* is fixed and determined: if not fixed, it can only amount to an high Degree of Probability, or, at best, moral Certainty: And it must be more or less to be depended upon, in Proportion as the Person acting by an habitual Attachment to such particular Methods of Action, acts more or less mechanically, or makes nearer Approaches to *Necessity*, or an Impossibility to turn his Thoughts into another Channel. In short, Knowledge must keep Pace with the Nature of the Thing. Besides, the Soul often exerts a mere arbitrary Act of her invisible Empire in chusing *this* rather than *that*, where there is an absolute Indifference, without any Influence from any assignable Motives, Reasonings, or Passions.

But to take this Matter a little higher
 —A *future* Determination of my Will, before it has determined itself, is *no* Determination, is a mere Non-Entity. And of

G g

a mere

THE THIRD LETTER.

a mere Non-Entity, or *Nothing*, there can be no *Knowledge*. Consequently, God cannot read or foresee in my Soul, what is not there at all. Q. E. D.

But he may know what he will do *Himself*, his Will being invariable; and consequently there is no Difficulty in conceiving that he might fore-know your Existence, looking through the whole Plan of his Creation, and having a comprehensive View of all the Beings that have, or are to act their Part upon the Theatre of the World.

The same may be said of the Laws by which he governs the Material World, which are nothing more than the Deity's knowing that he will act uniformly and consistently, nothing but the Knowledge of his own Determinations. Whereas you intimate, that "what is *certainly* past was " *certainly* future; and what was *certainly* " future, might be *certainly* foreknown." Not to examine, whether there be not a Flaw, which I think there is, in the Argument; it is sufficient to say, that my Argument is at least a Match for it; that nothing can be *certain*, which *may*, or *may not* be; as depending upon the *undetermined* Will of a free Agent.

But you may ask, Do you not then believe the Divine Prescience? Yes, I do sincerely. Not because I think the Objec-
tions

tions against it are easily answered; but because the Proofs for it preponderate, and suffer me not to suspend my Assent. Were the *Trinity* in *Unity* embarrassed with so great Difficulties, you would have much more Reason to reject the Belief of it than you have at present.

But, *Manum de Tabulâ*—That Being who dwells in unapproachable Glory, is too bright an Object to contemplate, *Oculo irretorto*, with undazzled Eyes; without being blinded by the Excess of his Effulgence. I was going to enlarge, but have the Pleasure to find myself prevented by your Sentiments on that Head, which in a Letter, where every Thing is bright and ingenious, shine with *distinguished* Brightness. Your Thoughts are the same in Substance, as mine in my former, and only differ from them, as your's always will, in Vicacity, and your sprightly Happiness of Diction. There is as much Difference between the same Sentiment cloathed by you, "*quem Musæ quintâ parte sui Nectaris imbuerunt,*" and expressed in my homely Manner, as there is between the Actions of an accomplished Gentleman and of a Man of the common Rank. A *plain Man* may do an Action of the same intrinsic Worth as the *Gentleman*; but then the *Gentleman* never fails to stamp an additional Value upon what he does by a peculiar Grace, a Manner

THE THIRD LETTER.

and Decorum; and doubles an Obligation by bestowing it with the Air of a Person that is obliged. Thus I may hit upon a Thought the same materially as your's; but you can give a particular Charm and Beauty to it, and infuse, as it were, a Soul and Spirit into that Sentiment, which was a dull and uninformed Mass before. Free from that obscure Diligence which unhappily distinguishes the Writings of some great Scholars, a native Easiness makes Learning sit gracefully upon you without any forbidding Appearances.

I must not pass by an occasional Remark of your's upon the *Orthodox* in general; who, it seems, have Strength of Reason enough to see the Weakness of their Reason *in the deep Things of God*: And therefore will believe what has the *Stamp of Mystery* upon its Creation and Redemption—from the one we derive a *temporary Being*, from the other an *eternal Well-being*—Both of them invironed with Mystery—Both, notwithstanding *this* Reason, to be admitted—or both, for *that* Reason, to be discarded. You mention some, who love to *magnify Difficulties*, and *can digest nothing till they have made it indigestible*. I am not ignorant at whom this notable Piece of Satyr is levelled, and had I not resolved to keep in the Overflowings of my Gall, I should be tempted to make an impotent Reply. But I forbear—

I forbear—only indulge my Impertinence in making an unmeaning Reflection, which every Body must see is unapplicable to You.

Though Human Folly, like Matter, is much the same at all Times; yet it admits of an infinite Variety of *Modifications*: It is continually shifting the Scene, and is no sooner subdued in one Form, than it starts up in another. And had CERVANTES, who laughed out of Countenance, by an inimitable Vein of Raillery, *amours* and *military Romances*, the reigning Folly of that Age; had he, I say, lived now, he would have turned the Edge of his Ridicule against *Metaphysical Romances*, which are at present so much in Vogue. Nothing more common now-a-days than to erect new Schemes, which are for a while the Wonder of the Unthinking. And when the *strong Man*, well-armed with Learning and Abilities, keepeth his new-erected Building, his intellectual Goods are *in Peace*—till a *stronger than he ariseth, and strippeth him of his Armour in which he trusted*. How many fine *Hypotheses* have you and I seen in *Morality* and *Metaphysics*, which after having *flourished for a little Time withered away, because they had no Depth*? Whereas the Scriptures have stood the Test of Ages: They continue, like their great Author, *the same Yesterday, To-day, and for ever*; ever attacked, and ever triumphant. And when

THE THIRD LETTER.

once Men, enamoured of their own *Metaphysical Reveries*, relinquish them; (just as the *Israelites* forsook the living God) they set up some vain and senseless Idol of the Imagination; and then wonder that all Mankind do not *fall down* and *adore* it. I add farther, that whoever has attempted to explain away the venerable *Mysteries* of Christianity, has made the Doctrines far more *mysterious* than they were before. This is exemplified by Dr. CLARKE'S *Scripture-Doctrine, etc.* who has attempted to get rid of the Difficulties of the Orthodox Scheme at the Expence of much greater. "*Graviorem plagam recepit, ut leviolem repelleret.*"

You see, that this Reflection is, according to Promise, undesigning. I will add another that does concern you.

Men of the *common Level* may with Reason be afraid of being lost in a Crowd. To pass themselves upon the World for Men of Penetration, they must strike into new Tracks. But *You* will always be distinguished from the *Many* by the superior *Height* and *Elevation* of your Genius, When you *do not* differ from them,

—*Humero supereminet omnes,*

will be applicable to *You*.

I proceed

THE THIRD LETTER.

453

I proceed now to the second Part of your Letter, where I find nothing very material, till You attack the *Indiscerpible Bottom*, as You call it. In Answer to the Objection, *that this Person could not satisfy That, because the Essence was one and the same*; I observed, that Essence might be one and the same, because *indivisible*, or *indiscerpible*—Indiscerpibility was no Bar to Distinction and distinct Actions—Therefore the *Father* and the *Son* might act *distinctly* in giving and receiving Satisfaction.

Here I played my Cannon so briskly, that you were going to raise the Siege ingloriously; and to quit the Field in Precipitation and Disorder. But, like other Heroes, then exerting their Courage most, when in the deepest Distress; You at last, collected in yourself, bid me Defiance. I am sorry to find your Strength bears no Proportion to your Heroism. For, wanting better Weapons, you begin the Onset with *small Shot*; *aliàs, Indiscerpible Atoms*. Your *Metaphysical* Forces must be very poor and languid, when you were forced to call in *Natural Philosophy* to your Aid.

These *Indiscerpible Atoms*, by your own Confession, are not *absolutely* indiscerpible. But the Deity, if he does consist of Parts, consists of Parts *essentially unmoveable* from each other, and *unpartible*, without an express Contradiction in Terms. For all

G g 4

Division

THE THIRD LETTER.

Division implies Limitation, and Limitation is contrary to our Ideas of the Deity. He cannot be divided without ceasing to be infinite; because where there is a Chasm (and *Division* makes a Chasm) there can be no Infinity; and He cannot cease to be infinite, without ceasing to be God. He is *necessarily* what he is, consequently if he be undivided, he must be *necessarily undivided*, and *necessarily indivisible*. By *Parts* then in the Deity, if the Scheme of *Extension* be granted, we must not understand what is *partible* (for that is only true of *corporeal* Parts) but *Metaphysical* Parts; or *so much* of the Divine Substance, as is commensurate to such an assignable Portion of Matter. And to argue, that because *Physical* Parts are separable, therefore *Metaphysical* Parts must be so too, is a very inconclusive Way of Arguing; It is *Transito à Genere ad Genus*. Thus the *happy Beam of Light*, which you had struck upon, proves to be nothing else but an *Ignis Fatuus*.

You tell me, that *Indiscernibility* infers *Parts*; and I am sure *Discernibility* does. Hard Fate for those who would prove the Deity *Impartible*! for he must, it seems, have Parts, if he be either *discernible*, or *indiscernible*; either *divisible*, or *indivisible*.

The Sum and Substance of what I would say is this—That your indiscernible Atoms consist of *above* and *under*; of *this* and *that* Side;

Side; and it can be no Impossibility for the Deity, whatever it may be to the Powers of Nature, to separate the *Upper* from the *Under*, and *this* Side from *that*. But what can separate the Deity?—not Himself; no more than He would limit Himself: Not any created Being; for can a created Being limit and disjoin That by which he is created? You refer to what you have said before to disprove, that *Indissoluble Union* may constitute Unity, *etc.* and I take the same Privilege to refer to what I have said above in Proof of it. I never adopted the *extended Scheme*; but, because *You supposed* it; in Complaisance to you I argued from it; not ignorant, in the mean Time, that the *Trinity* would stand it's Ground upon the Scheme of *Non-Extension*, perhaps with greater, I am sure with equal Advantage. Why you call the Scheme *an unfriended Infant*, I want to be informed. Can that be *unfriended* which is countenanced by the great Names of LIMBORCH, LOCKE, TILLOTSON, CLARKE, and NEWTON? To which I add; with Pleasure, my ingenious *Correspondent* in the former Part of his Letter.

What you say below in this Page about a Contradiction, I have answered towards the Beginning of this Letter. *Indiscernibility is a negative Idea*. I am glad, that *Indiscernibility* is no Bar to Distinction, and distinct

Actions. *You allow* that it is not, and I heartily thank you : For, that being allowed, each Link of the Chain is made firm in my Argument, whether the *extended* or *unextended* Scheme takes place. But alas ! alas ! how short-lived and fleeting are human Joys ! Casting my Eyes upon another Page, I find you deny what you before allowed ; and tell me, that *Indivisibility is an Obstruction to Distinction*. I will not anticipate here what will be more proper to be said hereafter, when I come to that Page.

I wish I could draw a Veil over what is to follow. It will be a melancholy Scene. Nothing but your Request, which shall have always the Force of an authoritative Command with me, could prevail upon me to proceed to re-consider with great Reluctance your poor unfortunate *Tritheistical* Hypothesis.

The first Argument I produced against it was drawn from *Moses*, and our Saviour, who quotes the Text. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord (Jehovah) your God is one Lord ; one necessarily-existing Substance*. It is very observable that, after our Saviour had quoted these Words, when the Scribe said, *There is one God, and there is none other but He*, Christ commends the Scribe for *having answered discreetly* : Which he could not have done, if, besides that *only* God (*none other but He*) there had been a *Trinity* of Gods (according to Your Scheme) to be worshipped,

shipped. Our Saviour's Commendation of the Scribe is, consequently, a strong Reinforcement of the genuine Meaning of the Text.

By necessarily-existing Substance, *Moses* means, you say, the *Manner* of the Divine *Existence*: *No other Beings but your Three do exist in that Manner*. The Sense then is this. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord* (viz. such a *Manner of Existence*) *your God*, is one such *Manner of Existence*. And if he had meant this, the *Israelites* would have been no *wiser for this Assertion of Moses than You are*. According to this Interpretation when the Scriptures tell us, that God made at first *one Man*, from whom the rest descended; we need not understand that he made *one Being*, but *one such Manner of Existence*, which was originally communicated to a considerable Number of Men. For though *Jehovah* signifies one Being necessarily-existing, one τὸ ὄν, yet it may signify three separate Beings; provided their *Manner of Existence* be of the same Kind. *Jehovah* implies Being that exists by Necessity: And consequently, if the Scripture asserts one necessarily-existent Being, what Right have you to suppose three *divisible* Beings? What seems to have led you into your Mistake was this—*Jehovah*, necessarily-existing Substance, implies two Ideas; *Necessary Existence*, and the *Substance* or *Substratum* of that necessary Existence.

In

THE THIRD LETTER.

In your Exposition you retain the former of these Ideas; and drop the latter, that of the *Substratum*. And whereas your Comment should have run thus; The Substance vested with such a Mode of Existence as is there specified, is one Substance vested with that Mode; by letting the Idea of *Substance* slip out of the Account, you expound it thus: The Mode of Existence is one Mode of Existence. Is this, to turn your own Artillery upon you, to interpret Scripture according to the common Rules of Criticism? Or is it not rather to put a *forced an unintelligible Sense when it admits of a plain and intelligible Construction?* I say, plain and intelligible; *viz.* that Being and Being may be so closely and inseparably united as to make one Being, because they have an indivisible περιχώρησις ἑνυπαρξίς, a close *In-existence* and *Permeation* of one another, without any Possibility of being Sundered the one from the other. According to that of our Saviour—I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: And, the Father that dwelleth in me, etc. And is not this a much more rational Solution of the Difficulty, as well as more agreeable to Scripture, than your's; who suppose a forlorn *Mode* of necessary Existence to be meant in the Text without any *Substratum*? Besides, what think you of that celebrated Text, *There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father,*

THE THIRD LETTER.

461

Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One, τὸ ἓν εἰς, are one Being; one Nature; in Opposition to the Words in the next Verse, where the three Agents are said to *agree in one*, εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰς, have an *Uniformity*, but are not *united*? If you dispute the Genuineness of the Text, I refer you to MILL, MARTIN, TWELLS, BLACKWALL on the *sacred Classics*, and TRAPP'S *Moyer's Lectures*; If you admit the Text, you must admit that they are One, not merely *uniform* in Essence.

The second Argument against it was, that it was to multiply Beings without Necessity. You had no Grounds to suppose three separable Divine Beings, consequently the Supposition of three such Beings was groundless. Scripture, as I have proved above, is against you; and you cannot bring one Shadow of a Proof from Reason. As much as you deal in wonder-working Magic, you cannot conjure up one thin, airy, unsubstantial Phantom of an Argument from the *abstract Nature of the Thing*. You may prove from Effects *one* first Cause, but not *more* than one; *one* being sufficient to produce all the Phænomena in Nature.

It is contrary to the Laws of Disputation only to assert what you should prove: viz. *That you have Grounds for such a Supposition*. He that asserts a Thing should prove it. Thus defenceless is your *Hypothesis*, opposed
by

THE THIRD LETTER.

by plain Texts of Scripture, and *unfriended* by Reason. And what has been hitherto by you advanced, appears to be nothing but the uneasy Efforts of an *Hypothesis* expiring unavoidably, yet struggling hard for Life. Let us see whether you have better Success in what follows.

The third Argument against it you transcribe; which is, that if your supposed three infinite Substances be *divided*, or (for it is the same Thing here) *divisible*, they cannot all be infinite. The Reason, which you have not transcribed, is there subjoined: But if they be *undivided* or *indivisible*, then your Scheme coincides with that of the Orthodox; which is, “neither to confound the Persons, nor to divide the Substance.”

To this you reply; *Though you do not admit of three divided Substances, yet you grant they are divisible.* You granted too, what I proved, that if they be *divided*, they cannot be *infinite*. If then (as you grant, and I have proved) *Infinity* excludes *Division*; it follows, that what is *necessarily infinite*, must be *necessarily undivided*. But your three infinite Beings are necessarily *infinite*, as they are necessarily *existent*; they do not admit of any Diminution or Addition; consequently, they must be necessarily *undivided*; and what is necessarily *undivided* is *indivisible*. Or thus; If (as you allow) what is divided cannot

cannot be infinite, then a Possibility of Division supposes a Possibility of their ceasing to be infinite; and a Possibility of their ceasing to be infinite, supposes a Possibility of their ceasing to be what they necessarily are; which is a Contradiction in Terms.

Again; if nothing can act where it is not, then either each of your three Beings must necessarily co-exist every-where with an uninterruptible Fulness of Being without any Separability of the one from the other; or where there is a Separability of any one of them from the other, there is a Possibility for that Being not to exist there—Consequently, there is a Possibility of his not being able to act there—Consequently there is a Possibility of his becoming an impotent or imperfect Being—Consequently, he will not be necessarily God—Consequently he is no God at all.

You retreat again to your impregnable Fortress, *Consciousness*. *Consciousness*, you say, *cannot be supposed without any previous Distinction of Being to support it*. I grant it. But if the *Trinity* is Substance and Substance *essentially united*—If what is *essentially* united, is *one*; or, if *indissoluble* Union constitute *Unity*—then *Consciousness* or *Consciousnesses*, whatever *Distinction* of Being they may prove, cannot disprove the *Unity*. What is so necessarily rivetted and united,
let

THE THIRD LETTER.

let not that Inchanter *Consciousness* put afunder or difunite. This may ferve for an Answer to all you have faid concerning *Consciousness*, which does not injure our Scheme, nor benefit your's. For *Consciousness* cannot *divide* the Substance. I have already proved your fupposed three Subftances to be *indivifible*: And you unfortunately grant, that *divifible* and *diftinguifhable* are the fame; and fo it cannot *diftinguifh* them either without *dividing* them, which is impoffible. Thus you have got a Trinity of Gods, which are neither *divifible* nor *diftinguifhable*. *Diftinct without being divided* is, you are pleafed to fay, *unintelligible Jargon*.

And now having difpatched your Scheme, what hinders but I might indulge my fatirical Vein after your Example, which I fhall be proud to follow in every Thing elfe?—But I fcorn to insult the Dead—Peace, everlafting Peace be to the Shade of your moft lamented, and indeed moft lamentable Hypothefis! O darling Offspring of a worthy Sire! Could either my generous Pity (For thou waft, *vel Priamo miferanda*) or thy Father's Prowefs in War have faved thee, thou hadft not died. But when there are *mala Stamina Vitæ*; when the Vitals are unfound, all Human Endeavours are vain and ineffectual;

“Evandro, *qualem meruit, Pallanta remitto;*”
I fend

THE THIRD LETTER.

465

I send you back the dead Corpse to be buried in eternal Oblivion. I allow you, as you have an inexhaustible Fund of Wit, to say a World of fine Things upon it; to strew the Flowers of your Oratory upon it's lifeless Carcase, and to pay the last sad unavailing Office to it's *Manes*—

— “ *Manibus date lilia plenis* ”
 “ *His saltem accumulem Donis & fungar*
inani
 “ *Munere* ”—

Let not your paternal Tendernefs carry you any farther. Have no Recourse to magic Arts to call up it's fleeting Shade; or, if You do, do not expect that I should wage War with an unbodied Phantom.

“ *Irruit ac ferro frustra diverberat Umbras.* ”

It would undoubtedly have been barbarous to rob you of your unfortunate Infant, if your Imagination had been barren. But you may well bear the Loss. Your happy and inventive Fancy, which is married to so masculine and regular a Judgment, will soon repair the Damage with a numerous Race of beautiful and lasting Productions,

— “ *Pulchrâ faciat Te Prole Parentem.* ”

H h

To

THE THIRD LETTER.

To return ; I never affirmed, that "*Person* and *Substance* were unintelligible." All this whole Paragraph turns upon that Mistake ; and upon confounding *Unintelligible* with *Incomprehensible*.

In the next Paragraph you will not admit the Notion of an *infinitely-extended Deity*, for Fear it should draw along with it some Consequences, which would be injurious to your late dear departed Hypothesis. Well ; will you admit the Words of the *Psalmist* ? *Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go then from thy Presence ? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there : If I go down to Hell, thou art there also. If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea ; even there also shall thy Hand lead me, and thy Right-Hand shall hold me.* Is not acting in *Heaven distant* and *distinct* from acting in *Hell*, or in the *Sea* ? And does not *distinct, distant Action* prove *distant, distinct Substance* ; or a local Distinction of Substance ? " Can " a Thing," say you, " be distinct from " itself ? " No ; if by *Self* you mean *Personality*, and the *whole* of that *Personality*. For then the Question would be ; Can the *whole*, as *whole*, be *distinct* from the *whole* ? But Substance *essentially* united to Substance, and therefore *one*, may admit of *Distinction*. Answer me this Question : Is the Substance, which is in Heaven, one individual Sub-

stance with that which filleth all Things? And it will be an easy Matter to answer your's. God exists *wholly* in Heaven; or else there is only *Part* of God there. Well then; according to the Scheme of *Non-Extension*, to which you are a late Convert, can the same numerical Being be *confined*, and yet *unconfined*? "Can there be a Diffusion of it," to use Dr. WATERLAND'S Words, "every-where, and yet nothing be diffused?" For it is supposed that the whole Essence is *diffused* all over the Universe, and yet remains whole and *undiffused* in Heaven. According to the Scheme of *Non-Extension* we have so many distinct, numerical *Wholes*, which make one numerical, *distinct Whole*, because essentially united. According to the Scheme of *Extension*, we have so many *distinct numerical Parts*, which have the *whole Attributes* residing in them, and yet make one numerical Substance, for the same Reason. Both agree, that the Divine Nature is *distinct*, though *undivided*.

Supposing my Soul had exactly the same Perfections as your's, (by the Way, I wish mine had) and were, by the Power of God, unalienably united; so that you became, in a literal Sense, *Dimidium Animæ meæ*, which you are now in a *figurative one*; it is plain they would be *one*, as far as we understand any Thing of *Unity*. For when we perceive

any Object in a *continued Position*, fenced out from other Things, we never scruple to give it the Name of *One*; and being incapable of Separation, and being of the same Kind and Degree, they might not only be *called*, but would really *be* strictly *One*. But it is not so plain, that this *Unity* between us would be a Bar to all *Distinction*: You might exert yourself in a *distinct* Manner; You might be adorning *Morality*, while I was employed in dry *Metaphysicks*.

“ If three intelligent Acting *Substances* “ can be made out to be one intelligent “ Acting *Substance*, then, *etc.*” Answer: This supposes Unity of Person and Unity of Substance to be equivalent, Whereas Plurality of Persons implies the Substance, though *united*, to be *distinguished* after such a Manner; Plurality of Substances implies the Substance to be *divided*. So many separable Persons are so many Substances; but Persons having no possible Detachment the one from the other, are one Substance. The Persons then are each *Substance*, but not *A Substance*; because we never give the Name of *A Substance* but where the Substance is *aliene*, and independent of another. Person then, each Divine Person, as I said before, is *Being*, because it exists; but not *A Being*, because the Persons do not exist separate.

I

In

In Answer to this, you oblige me with another Specimen of my Reasoning: "God and my Soul are," according to my Way of Arguing, "each *Being*; but not *Beings*, " because they do not exist separately." And is this a Specimen of my Reasoning? Surely you could not think me so senseless. My Soul is *actually* divided from God as He exists in Heaven; and as to that *particular* (I was going to say *numerical*) Substance, in which I *live, and move, and have my Being*, I am capable of being removed from That, considered as *particular*, to any Other, (call it Portion or Whole) of the Deity. Wherever I go the Deity is still. But then it is the Deity as *locally distinct*; and by Annihilation I am entirely cast out of his Presence.

But this is not all. Another Ingredient of Unity is, that the Substance be of *the same Kind, or homogeneous*. Now though God is a Spirit, and my Soul a Spirit; yet Spirit does not signify one *determinate* Kind of Being; but is one of your *negative Ideas*. And though we call every Thing *Spirit* that is *not Matter*; yet it is as improper a Division to range Beings into Spirit and not-Spirit, as it would be into *Horse* and not-*Horse*. As my Soul is of a quite different Essence from the Table on which I write, though they are both Substance; so God transcends my Soul infinitely more (though they are both Spirit) than my Soul can this Table.

THE THIRD LETTER.

Homogeneity therefore, or a Negation of Mixture, being to be taken into the Account of *Unity*, as well as *Indivisibility*; it is plain my Soul, however closely *united*, cannot be strictly one with God.

To conclude. Whatever Being *homogeneous*, is essentially united, is one, whether the Scheme of Extension, or Non-Extension takes Place; nay, if you should reject them both, it will stand collected in itself upon the sure Bottom of common Sense. The Trinity is *Substance* and *Substance* essentially united—Therefore the Trinity is *One*.

You will find this Letter very confused: But having had so many Proofs of your Candor, I am under no Apprehension upon that Account.

I should be dead to all Sentiments of Friendship, if unaffected with your last very affectionate Paragraph. I cannot equal it; and therefore will not attempt it.

That you may long continue happy in the Possession of an easy Fortune, a clear Head, and a generous Heart, is the sincere Wish of,

SIR,

Your most affectionate Friend,

And humble Servant,

JER. SEED.

THE FOURTH LETTER.

*To the Rev. T. H. relating to a Passage in
one of the Author's Sermons.*

DEAR SIR,

I AM obliged to any Person, who will point out to me what he apprehends to be a Fault in any of my Writings. As to the Passage which you mention, *Vol. II. p. 95.* my only Fault is, which is a great One, that I have not expressed myself as I should have done. My Meaning was, that “the Number of the Damned will bear no more Proportion to that of the Blessed *“ throughout the whole Universe, than, etc.”* not confining myself to the Inhabitants of the Earth: Accordingly, in this very Sermon, *Page 125, Line 19th,* I expressly call the *Damned* a *few incurable Members of the whole stupendous Body of the Universe*; not meaning that they were *absolutely* few, but *comparatively* with the whole Body of intelligent Beings. If the worthy Gentleman, whose Name you do not mention, had thought my Words capable of this Construction, I dare venture to say, he would not have made any Objection against them.

H h 4

But

THE FOURTH LETTER.

But supposing my Words will not bear this Sense; give me Leave to observe, that they are not a positive *Affertion*, as you seem to think; they are only a charitable *Presumption*. If I had had sufficient Authority from Scripture, I would not have said, *it may be presumed*; but, *it is certain*. The Reasons for such a *Presumption* (for they are not strong enough to found any *Doctrine* upon) are as follow. *First*, If I am not mistaken, one half of Mankind are cut off before they come to the full Use of their Reason, or have *their Senses* sufficiently exercised to discern between moral Good and Evil. These, if baptized, are undoubtedly in a State of Salvation; if unbaptized, they may be saved by the uncovenanted Mercies of God; at least, they will not be made miserable in a future State. *Secondly*, If you add to these all those who live and die in a State of invincible Ignorance, or a State that makes very near Approaches to it, (surprizing Instances of which you may meet with even in our own Country) the Number rises greatly above one half of Mankind. *Thirdly*, Among *Adults*, (who have, or may have clear Ideas of their Duty) for one that lives and dies a hardened Criminal, there are Numbers who do not allow themselves in the habitual Practice of any deliberate, known Sin. Instances of Baseness, Villainy, and malicious Wicked-

ness

ness are still *surprizing* ; which they would not be, unless they were rare and uncommon. But enough of this, that I may not enter on a beaten Topick.

It has been proved at large, that there is far more moral Good than Evil even in this Earth ; and consequently, one would think, far more *good* Men, in a qualified Sense of the Word, than *bad* : Consequently, there will be more happy than miserable even among *Adults*, who have, or may have just Apprehensions of their Duty. And for those who have not, and perhaps cannot have, God will *accept them according to what they have, and not according to what they have not*. These last, however, I take to make up the Bulk of Mankind in all Ages. For the Prevalency of moral Good, see Archbishop KING on the *Origin of Evil*, especially *Note (AA)*.

Laying all these Things together, *viz.* the Case of Infancy and Childhood, the Case of invincible Ignorance, the much greater Number of good Actions than bad, I think there are sufficient Grounds for a charitable Presumption, and I meant nothing more. A great many other Things might be taken into the Account, as the Strength of some Men's Passions, which I have hinted at in the same Paragraph. As for the Scripture Texts which seem to say, that the Number of the *saved* will be *few*, I beg Leave to refer

THE FOURTH LETTER.

refer the Gentleman to *Sermon XIIth, Vol. IV.* of Dr. CLARKE's *Posthumous Sermons*; to which I may add the pious and judicious Archbishop SHARP, in his *VIth Sermon of Vol. III.*

But if the Gentleman should think the Passage indefensible, as perhaps it is, I shall either strike it out, if ever the Book has a second Edition, or qualify it as above*: And any other obnoxious Passage, which he or you will be so kind as to shew me, shall have the same Fate. Pray my humble Service to him.

I write this with a violent Fit of the Head-ach upon me, which hinders me from expressing myself so well as I could wish.

I am ashamed, that I have not answered a former Letter of your's before this. The Truth of the Matter is, it is unanswerable: Though I always read your Letters with Pleasure, yet it is a Mortification to me to answer them: Because I cannot write with that Life and Spirit with which you do. I thank you for the many ingenious Things you say in your last. I shall keep it by me as an Instance how far you could be mistaken, in your younger Years, in your

* N. B. The Author has qualified the Passage referred to, by adding the Words, *throughout the whole Creation.* Vid. SEED's *Sermons, Vol. II. p. 97. Second Edition.*

favourable

THE FOURTH LETTER.

475

favourable Judgment on me and my Sermons. I hope this Letter will find you well. It is some Pleasure to me, that you do not complain of your bad State of Health, as you did in the Letter before. What Success do your Proposals meet with? I am afraid you find, what I always observed, that the World does not encourage modest Worth. Pray let me hear from you, and believe me to be,

DEAR SIR,

Your affectionate Friend,

Enham, July 12,
1743.

J. SEED.

THE FIFTH LETTER.

*Wrote, under a feigned Name, to a FRIEND
in a dangerous Fit of Sicknefs.*

SIR,

A Sincere Desire to do you Good, which is my only Motive to write, must be likewise my only Apology for troubling you with this Letter.

If I am not misinformed, your Case is not without some Danger: You may, for ought you know, stand just upon the Brink of Eternity; an Eternity of Happiness, or Misery. And will you, Sir, audaciously rush into the sacred Presence of the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, as *the Horse rusheth into the Battle*, without any Forethought or Consideration what may become of you hereafter? No, Sir, *I hope better Things* from you, who cannot be unapprised of the great Value of an immortal Soul. Can Man, foolish Man, that cannot often gain the least Preferment here without considerable Application, think, that *an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory* will be prostituted to his lazy Wishes and spiritless Endeavours, or perhaps to his No-Endeavours at all?

GOD,

GOD, Sir, has blessed you with very good Sense; be pleased then to exert it, in considering—Whether you have fully answered the End, for which an infinitely-wise Being sent you into the World—Whether you have endeavoured to keep up a Sense of the Regard due to the Deity, by an exemplary Piety; and to promote the Good of your Fellow-Creatures by an active Benevolence. Do not you think these Ends worthy of a reasonable Being? And do not you think that God created you to answer these Ends? Your Illness, Sir, is perhaps a lingering Illness, and you may yet perhaps, in some Measure, answer the End of your Creation, by joining, as far as your Health will permit, with your Family in Morning and Evening Prayers; by expressing an undissembled Love and Gratitude to that Being, who died to procure Pardon and eternal Happiness for you, for me, nay, even for the greatest of Sinners, upon their sincere Repentance; by forgiving every one, that has wronged you, and by making ample Restitution, if you have wronged any; by bearing your Sickness with Patience, and an humble Resignation to God. Your *Sun*, though probably near its *setting*, may yet *shine* out, and those, who are near you, may see, and be influenced by your good Works, *to go, and do likewise.*

Pardon

THE FIFTH LETTER.

Pardon me, Sir, if I take the Liberty to tell you, that I am sorry to hear you have generally neglected to receive the *Sacrament*. If this is true, you have lived in a State of wilful Disobedience to one of God's express Commands. And wilful Disobedience to that Being, from whom every Thing that you have is received, and to whom every Thing that you can do is but your bounden Tribute, is no slight, no inconsiderable Crime. You, who, perhaps, may think it not immoral to disobey the great Majesty of Heaven in positive Instances; yet would judge it highly criminal for a Son to disobey his Parent, or a Servant his Master in indifferent Matters. To eat Bread, and drink Wine, is indeed *in itself* of no Signification. But to eat Bread and drink Wine out of a Principle of sincere Obedience to Him who made You, and of Love and Gratitude to Him who redeemed you, with an affectionate Desire that you may be a Partaker of the Benefits of his Passion——this is Virtue, substantial Virtue. Whatever crude and undigested Notions some may form of God's Mercy, it is as certain, as it is that there is a Deity, that he will make some Distinction between those who have obeyed him, and those who have wilfully disobeyed him. And what that Distinction will be, I leave you to consider. Those cannot be entitled to the Divine Favour, that are regardless of the Divine Will and Pleasure.

But, before you receive the *Sacrament*, it will be necessary for you to take a Review of your past Life. Your Sicknefs having confined you to your Room, you must have a great many vacant Hours upon your Hands; and a Christian ought to be then most busy, when, in the Language of the World, he has nothing to do: But, in the Language of Reason and Christianity, has his *eternal Salvation to work out with Fear and Trembling*. Judge yourself, and *then you will not be judged of the Lord*. But if you neglect to do this, then think what a shocking Thing it must be to give an Account before the greatest Being in the World, of a Life, that you perhaps cannot reflect on seriously in private, and by yourself, without Shame and Confusion. Look up to that Being whom you have offended, with all the Humility of a contrite Spirit, and look upon this World as (what it may soon perhaps in Reality be) *Nothing to you*. Soon, very soon (oh, may it not prove too soon for you! I mean before a thorough Repentance) *may* that Being, whom *none can see, and live*, sit in Judgment, on your Soul: And then you must either be, what I sincerely wish, eternally happy; or, what I tremble to think of, eternally miserable. If the latter, which God forbid! should be your Case: How dreadful must it be to lift up those Eyes, which

THE FIFTH LETTER.

which you had wilfully shut before, just as you are sinking, irrecoverably sinking, in endless Misery? *Behold, now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation!* On your present Behaviour, on this great Crisis, *your ALL depends!* God, who will *not despise a troubled and a contrite Heart*, will have Compassion on you, provided you have first Compassion on yourself. But if you do not return to him with a whole Heart; nothing is more fit, than that they, who are incorrigibly Bad, should be irretrievably Wretched.

I say no more. May God grant that *you may know the Things belonging to your Peace, before they be for ever hid from your Eyes!*

Thus I have wrote, what I am sure is a very *affectionate*, and what I wish may prove a very *affecting* Letter. It is not material to inform you, from what *Hand* this Epistle comes: It is enough to assure you, that it proceeds from an *Heart* sincerely your's,

May 9.



E. E.